

LITERARY LEADERS
OF AMERICA

RICHARD BURTON



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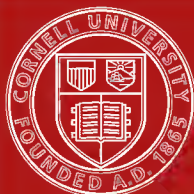
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LITERARY LEADERS OF AMERICA

*A CLASS-BOOK ON AMERICAN
LITERATURE*

BY

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NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

1904

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Norwood Press
J. S. Cushing & Co. — Berwick & Smith Co.
Norwood, Mass., U.S.A.

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INTRODUCTION

AMERICAN LITERATURE

THE literature of a country is made up of the writings of those who have had the gift and skill to express themselves in such a way as to move and charm their readers. To be literature, in the best sense, a piece of writing, whether prose or verse, must have beauty of expression and inherent worthiness of thought. While we cannot deny the name "literature" to some writing which has attraction of form, without importance of thought and ennobling emotions, we can affirm that the truly great literature, that which is likely to have permanence, will show artistic quality along with intellectual and moral significance.

Moreover, the literature of a country, to be really representative, must reflect the life of the people, external and internal; it must stand for its political, social, and ethical ideals. It must, in a word, be the natural outcome of its national life. American literature, therefore, embraces all the writings which, on the one hand, are possessed of beauty of form and value as thought, and also reflect with some measure of truth the national existence. Our American literature is valuable to the young student and future citizen of the Republic just in proportion as it seems to mirror our American ideals and as it shall have a tendency to build up the reader into a worthy citizenship.

The typical literature of a land, in addition to satisfying the instinct for beauty and stimulating the mind by imaginative creations, should thus teach patriotism and train character. Whatever the esthetic value of our native literature, it has always in its best examples performed this service.

In writing a comprehensive history of American literature, it is customary to begin with Captain John Smith, an adventurous sixteenth-century Englishman, and then to study the writings of all the men who left work of any importance in the development of the life upon the native shores. This method implies a mingling of historical and literary interest, since many of these early writers did not make great literature; indeed, hardly made literature at all. Just here it would be well to make a distinction, the misunderstanding of which, I believe, often confuses the student. A given author may be of considerable significance in the development of the national literature, because, seen in the setting of his time, he had more importance than any contemporary, or because from him has come an important evolution. Yet he may be by no means a writer of the first rank, or even of the second class, judged by comparative tests. In short, his importance is historical and relative. Often, in text-books, he is made to loom up so large that the student is puzzled as to his real standing. In the present book, devoted in the main to the dominant figures of our literature, those of first importance, it will not be necessary to dwell long on those of lesser note. The high lights only will be emphasized. To get a bird's-eye view, this is necessary; otherwise, one fails to see the forest for the leaves. In the short introductory chapter which follows, the earlier periods are summarized. Then the chief business of the

book is taken up ; namely, a setting forth of the dozen or more great writers who have made our literature widely known. Then, finally, follows a brief survey of contemporary conditions, in which the present state of national letters is considered.

But, first, a question: Have we an American literature at all? More than one critic of standing have taken the ground that strictly we have not. The meaning back of the assertion is that, broadly viewed, American literature is simply British literature upon American soil, a variant, not an independent production. American literature looks to the same great past, expresses itself in the same tongue. There is not the difference, for example, between English and American literature that exists between that of any two of the so-called Romance tongues, like the Italian and Spanish.

The matter is in truth debatable, but it is largely a quarrel over terms. For practical purposes, there is a national literature, particularly that produced during the last century, as distinguished from a British. If it were not so, Americans would be as eager to buy British books as those of their own authors, and it would argue an absence of independent national life, which were to ignore our wonderful history and all that makes us American.

Use the same language we do, but even the language has a different idiomatic color from the present British, as all educated folk and especially traveled folk are aware. And our historical evolution, our climate and physical geography, our political and social ideals, and the type of people developed by all these things for two hundred and fifty years have resulted in bringing into our letters a quality and putting upon it a stamp which are distinctive, justifying the opinion that there is an American literature

in the true sense. This view may be held without any antagonism toward British influence and British accomplishment. That this distinction should have arisen is entirely in accord with the usual happening when peoples of the same stock separate on the face of the earth. The Germanic settler in England spoke a tongue which was a dialect closely akin to the German and still closer to what we now call the Dutch. In the course of centuries a differentiation had arisen because the German settlers had sought another home, with the result that their tongue, English, became an entirely different speech from that of the Continental peoples whence they came. The same process is at work in America; the very much slighter difference between the tongues being due, of course, to the comparatively short time that has elapsed since the separation, and the additional fact that in our day of rapid and easy communication all speech is far less isolated than it was in earlier times. Centripetal and centrifugal forces are thus at work, and it is inconceivable that American English should ever become unintelligible to an Englishman, but it is not at all inconceivable that in the years to come our native speech shall become more rather than less distinctive. Hence, since our speech and our life are thus independent, it is the most natural thing in the world that our literature should likewise and increasingly have a flavor of its own.

It is then, on the whole, correct to speak of an American literature, meaning such a variation from the parent British product in letters as to imply an independent existence. In this our literature is unique, since in no other case is there an independent literature unless it be expressed in another language. This belief in our own literature should not make Americans self-satisfied with

their literary product, or lead them to forget that while we inherited our literature, as it were, ready-made from England, historical conditions for several hundred years kept back letters on this continent from being cultivated as they might have been under more favoring circumstances. The proper attitude for an American toward his own literature, it seems to me, should be one of modest, firm, hopeful, unboastful faith. In view of our history, we have done much; we have a past to be proud of, and certainly our accomplishment in the future should be noteworthy, and signs are not wanting that it will be. There is ample reason why an American should have especial interest in the native literature. Even if the greatest American writers — Poe, Irving, Emerson, and Hawthorne — were of less than international importance, they would have a significance for us, which is the measure of the truth and power wherewith they interpret for us the national conditions and ideals: our habits and beliefs, our hopes and potentialities. Every representative American writer is thus dear and precious, aside from the fact that he has made what the world calls great literature. A few have done so, but many more have reflected the conditions of life in this country, and in this sense have constituted themselves true interpreters of these United States, — to be treasured by all Americans who love their land. It will be seen that any just and fruitful study of American literature in its best examples is, therefore, far more than a study of literary development; it is, or should be, a lesson in patriotism.

Just here it will be well to enlarge a little upon the misconceptions of the term "literature" itself. The word is often used simply to denote all writings about a subject, whatever is to be found in print. Thus we speak of the

literature of a subject when that subject is geography, and mean the books bearing upon that study. This, of course, is a loose, general application of the word, but, in the truer and better sense, literature refers to all writing that possesses power and beauty of expression. This truth, that manner is important as well as matter, has, however, led, especially in our own day, to a too great emphasis upon technique at the expense of thought and character. Really noble literature, on the contrary, exhibits, in combination, beauty of form and worthiness of content; or, to modify a famous definition of Matthew Arnold's, literature is the most beautiful way of saying something worthy to be said. Very much so-called literature of the nineteenth century fails because it is exquisitely said, but not worth saying, — not worth it intellectually or morally; or, worse, it says with technical skill what is paltry or vicious. The healthy-minded student and lover of literature, therefore, should steer his course between two mistakes which confront him, Scylla and Charybdis: the mistake of thinking that all that is in books is literature, and the mistake of believing that good technique necessarily means good and great literature.

In trying to get some notion of American letters, there is an advantage in giving main attention to the representative writers. It fixes the eye on the unquestionably excellent; it does not give undue space to earlier writers who, though important when we are tracing the full literary evolution, nevertheless are chiefly significant for their historical value, as minor links in the chain. Manuals of literature are in the habit of giving considerable space, for example, to the Colonial period, to such figures as Captain John Smith or Cotton Mather; or later to the Revolutionary period and the political writers it begot.

This is perfectly proper, if only it be borne in mind that the purpose in so doing is to study the full course of our literary development. The danger is that the beginner, or the student, who as yet has not a comprehensive knowledge of the whole story, misunderstands the relative values and gives to those early writers, tentative, feeble, and non-literary as they mostly were, an exaggerated importance in the total effect. In the present volume it is desired to avoid this possible evil. In fact, it is safe to say that the nineteenth century includes the really representative and major work in American letters. What came before, interesting and historically important as it was, stands, nevertheless, for preparation and trial rather than for permanently acceptable accomplishment.

CHAPTER I

THE EARLIER PERIOD

THE Colonial time in American history was perforce sternly practical. As a result, of literature there was little or none. What writing was done had a utilitarian aim ; as when Captain John Smith wrote an account of the Virginia colony to send to England as a guide to other immigrants ; or it was of a religious nature, composed after the manner of the preacher for purposes of moral instruction or theologic guidance. To put it briefly, adventurers and clergymen, and mostly the latter, did the bulk of the writing from 1607 to 1765 ; the adventurers first, and later, as conditions became settled and civilization advanced, the clergymen. When the mother country, England, is contrasted with the United States during this period of more than one hundred and fifty years, the paucity of the literary product here is strikingly illustrated. In 1607 Shakespeare was alive and writing his greatest plays ; throughout the seventeenth century his fellow Elizabethan dramatists and those coming later in the Stuart reigns were making the Golden Age of English literature. Great writers outside the drama, like Bacon, Hooker, Raleigh, and Dryden, were leaving works that were to become classics. Late in the seventeenth century and in the beginning of the eighteenth the brilliant Restoration Comedy, led by Congreve, was being produced. In the second half of the eighteenth century the essay was born with Addison and Steele ; while by the

year 1765, the limit of the period, the modern novel had been initiated and developed by Richardson, Fielding, and Smollett to a wonderful degree of perfection, and Johnson and Goldsmith were doing critical and creative work which was to have an abiding place in British literature annals. Set over against this wonderful array of representative English writers, in accomplishment so varied, brilliant, and important that no other period of like length can compare with this in the whole history of English literature, the names of Captain John Smith, Jonathan Edwards, and Cotton Mather,—the three most mighty writers during the same term of years in America,—and we can appreciate to the full the startling literary poverty of this country in its beginnings. There is, of course, in this comparison no thought of reproach. Given the conditions, it was inevitable that it should have been so. The conquering of material conditions must always precede intellectual and artistic activity, for their own sakes, and the Puritans and Cavaliers of the early days in New England and Virginia had set before them the most practical of tasks: to subjugate the Indian, make the soil yield harvests, clear the forests, and in the clearings erect habitable homes, to begin housewifery within doors, and without the simple industries of the pioneer life.

Such literary activity as existed was divided at first between Virginia and New England. In the South, only seventeen years after the founding of Jamestown in 1607, Captain John Smith published his "History of Virginia."¹

¹ There are numerous manuals of American literature in which details here omitted are supplied, and a much fuller treatment of this early stage of our literary development is given. The reader wishing such a volume is referred to the following: "A History of American Literature," by Walter C. Bronson.

He was a soldier of fortune, a man of the sword rather than of the pen, who wrote with no thought of literary excellence, but yet with a certain picturesque vigor, which is at least in part explained by the fact that he lived in England, and Shakespeare's English was in the air. It must be remembered that any writer like Smith had the advantage of English speech in its very finest and strongest period of existence—the flower of English expression. Even ordinary men had a righteousness imputed to them which was not their very own. The Elizabethan Englishman often assumed a virtue even if he had it not. Smith's account of his rescue by Pocahontas keeps his memory green with schoolboys and their elders, and the fact that some modern historians doubt the story and, indeed, regard Smith's statements in general with skepticism has no effect upon the affectionate interest in the dramatic Pocahontas scene.

As affairs in Virginia became settled and a genteel plantation life was developed, there might very well have sprung up a polite literature, but the Virginia gentleman preferred field sports and indoor social diversions to letters. There is no other name in the Colonial days of that state comparable with that of Captain Smith; here and there cultivated men—college presidents or professors or clergymen—wrote histories of Virginia. George Sandys, Virginia's first poet, was simply an Englishman who finished upon American soil his translation of a poem of Ovid's—perchance to take his mind from the Indian troubles which raged outside. Strachey and Hammond are writers for the specialist rather than the general reader. Colonel Byrd's "History of the Dividing Line," an account of the work of establishing, in 1729, the boundary between Virginia and North Carolina, is perhaps more literary in touch and tone

than anything else of the period ; and it must be understood that the style of these American pioneers, early as well as late, was that of cultivated persons accustomed to the best models of the mother country. There was little to mark them as Americans in any true sense ; but sometimes, as with Smith, they wrote of local conditions, and this makes them interesting for us ; and at the best they united, like Colonel Byrd, a graphic account of American affairs with a good deal of imagination and taste. Of the Virginia writers as a group it may be said that their subjects as a whole were historical or descriptive ; political writing was minor and hardly worthy of mention.

Not so with New England in the same period. There the religious interest predominated, and some of the names are of genuine importance as writers ; as witness those of Bradford, Eliot, Hooker, Roger Williams, Anne Bradstreet, Wigglesworth, Cotton Mather, Judge Sewall, Jonathan Edwards — a formidable list.

Yet if pure literature be the test, there is very little, after all, to detain us. The poets, Bradstreet and Wigglesworth, can be placed by themselves, and of them it is enough to say that the woman singer was imitative of the stock English model and Wigglesworth's subject, "Doomsday," was so anti-poetical and severe that it would have taken the genius of a Milton to give it plastic shape and musical sound. Of the prose writers, Eliot, the Indian apostle, did great service by his translation of the Bible for the red man. Hooker, of Connecticut, is a name ever honored as a town founder and constitution maker, whose sermons have dignity, and often a certain charm. Governor Winthrop's "History of New England" is not so interesting for our purposes, however valuable historically, as are his famous "Letters,"

which embody the correspondence with his wife, and in their quaint phraseology and lovely feeling, are not seldom of unfeigned beauty ; while Judge Sewall's " Diary " can be read with pleasure to-day, largely for its unconscious humor and piquant revelations of the way a Puritan of position aforetime compromised with Mammon while keeping his godliness. Cotton Mather's chief fame is as witch tamer rather than as writer, although if bulk were the test, he would be in the first rank.

Unquestionably the greatest name of the group for literature is that of Jonathan Edwards, that stern divine, whose fulminations from the pulpit harried up the souls of his flock, whose view of hell seems now among the incredibles of early theology. Edwards's sermons hardly did justice to the personal loveliness of the man, his magnetic power in the pulpit at Northampton, Massachusetts, and, indeed, the not seldom tremendous vividness and strength of his religious utterances. Had his powers been destined to display themselves in an environment more favorable, he might have left literature not fatally circumscribed by such a subject as his well-known ordination sermon, " Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." The speech of many of these early writers has a certain attraction, simply because of what is now for us its old-time flavor, the quaint terms and unwonted forms of the expression.

Outside of Virginia and New England there is little that calls for recognition, or takes permanent place. Philadelphia produced numerous writers, but none of such importance as Benjamin Franklin, who may fairly be called the first American producing literature of more than historical interest ; whose work indeed has value to-day as a living force. His earlier writings fall in the Colonial period, but

his major work belongs in the Revolutionary period, whose ideals were potent in developing his genius. He may therefore be spoken of briefly in considering the Revolutionary period of 1765-1789.

Broadly viewed, the writings stimulated by Revolutionary events were political, as was natural, where earlier the conditions of Colonial settlement and the religious interests of the colonies furnished the dominant impulse for those who registered their thoughts in writing. For the most part, therefore, the printed works, during this quarter of a century, were practical rather than artistic. The expression was secondary, the practical effect the main thing. Thomas Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence—surely a noble instrument of its kind, though somewhat high-flown and stilted to our modern taste. Otis in the North, and Patrick Henry in the South, were orators far less effective on the printed page than in their own persons; it being ever the penalty of oratory that unlike other forms of literature, full half its effect depends upon the personality of the speaker, and hence it has at best a dubious life in after time. The Massachusetts leader, Samuel Adams, was a fluent essayist, with a turn for satire, while Alexander Hamilton in his state papers showed a wonderful maturity in view of his youth, and wrote with Madison the *Federalist* papers, which still are regarded as political writing of a rare quality. Thomas Paine's "Common Sense," full of racy vigor as well as intellectual power, made him the early champion of what was then deemed atheism; although read to-day his religious position is that of a liberal rather than what we would now call a radical.

Among the letter writing of the time, nothing has so much literary worth as the "Journal" of John Woolman,

whose lucid spirituality made the calm beauty of his words the fit reflection of a noble personality, which in our day strongly attracted the later and greater Quaker, Whittier. The more definitely literary endeavor was mostly feeble, the name of the French Crèvecoeur having some significance because his "Letters for an American Farmer" are the first examples of sketches of native types and places by one whose point of view was comparative and his manner lively. Of poetry the quantity was satisfactory, if not the quality. Songs and ballads striking a popular note were numerous, lacking in art, but of a wholesome patriotism, and possessed of much more life than the jejune imitations of the style of Pope, Johnson, or Addison. Most worthy of mention in a sketch like this are Joel Barlow, John Trumbull, Timothy Dwight, and Philip Freneau. The two first named were of the little group residing in Hartford, Connecticut, and known as the "Hartford wits." Dwight was president of Yale, an ancestor of the later president of the same name, while Freneau, a Huguenot Frenchman by race, was a graduate of the college now known as Princeton, lived in New York and Philadelphia, and pursued the varied occupations of sea captain and editor. Trumbull was a learned lawyer and judge; he did much verse, in which the influence of Gray and Collins, as lyric models, was apparent. He wrote his best-known poem as a vigorous burlesque of epic style to satirize the Tories; its interest is of the time, and the nature of the subject precludes the performance from being American in any true sense. Dwight's chief contribution is also epic, in form and serious in intention, "The Conquest of Canaan," whose eleven books are commonplace and respectable to a maddening degree. Barlow is an example of what often happens in poetry; his ponderous "Colum-

biad," in which the theme at least is properly native, is but a curiosity to-day, while his brief "Hasty Pudding" contains a genuine lively humor and picturesque accounts of native rural scenes, like the husking bee : contrary to the "Columbiad," the breath of life is in it, and the poem can still be read with some pleasure.

Far above these other poets, or would-be poets, is Freneau. In spite of the fact that his work often seems a sort of sounding-board for the reduplication of the strains of standard masters, this singer possessed real imagination, and at times wore the singing robes with the true grace of the bard born not made. There are touches of nature description in his verse — "The Wild Honeysuckle" is an example — which foretell Bryant. His somber "House of Night," most remarkable of his longer pieces, has here and there a haunting quality like that of Poe's, and could only have been produced by a man of genius for imaginative metrical expression. In a word, Freneau is the sole American poet who before the nineteenth century could fairly be given the name in its higher meaning. His "Wild Honeysuckle" is well worth quotation, and here follows : —

THE WILD HONEYSUCKLE

Fair flower, that dost so comely grow,
Hid in this silent, dull retreat,
Untouch'd thy honey'd blossoms blow,
Unseen thy little branches greet :
No roving foot shall find thee here,
No busy hand provoke a tear.

By Nature's self in white array'd,
She bade thee shun the vulgar eye,
And planted here the guardian shade,
And sent soft waters murmuring by ;

Thus quietly thy summer goes,
Thy days declining to repose.

Smit with those charms that must decay,
I grieve to see your future doom ;
They died — nor were those flowers less gay,
The flowers that did in Eden bloom ;
Unpitying frosts, and Autumn's power
Shall leave no vestige of this flower.

From morning suns and evening dews
At first thy little being came :
If nothing once, you nothing lose,
For when you die you are the same ;
The space between is but an hour,
The frail duration of a flower.

That last line has a touch of the true magic of expression.

From among his contemporaries who wrote prose, Benjamin Franklin towers as a very leviathan of the literary waters. His fame is so thoroughly fixed in our history, his activity took so many directions, that one has to detach his literary accomplishment from his reputation as editor, scientist, diplomat, educationist, philanthropist, and man of the world, in order to appreciate it. Franklin's life was a long one ; he began early to express himself in print, and he was a voluminous writer who left many books. But his permanent contribution to our letters is to be found in "Poor Richard's Almanac," to which it may be well to add his "Autobiography," for an equivalent to which we have to come down to our own era and name that by General Grant. The "Almanac" may fairly be called an American classic of its kind ; it lives to-day in many beautiful editions, and is widely read. Its rich common sense, its aphoristic wisdom, couched in rustic phrase and homely wisdom, pat and perfect for its

purpose, and what is more, the revelation of some of the fundamental American traits thus early in our history, make it a valuable document in the case of American literature. The salt of its humor would alone preserve it. That such a work should be produced by the middle of the eighteenth century, argues strongly that an independent literature would spring up on this continent if only time were given it. Franklin is the embodiment of shrewd, sane, good sense ; his morality is that of a town policeman ; his doctrine is utilitarian ; there is no height of aspiration or burst of poetry in him. He is worldly and other worldly rather than spiritual. But his time and his own life largely explain the mundane quality of his work. The eighteenth century in England was one of small ideas, or the lack of them, of urban thought and ways. The ethical writers were cold, narrow, and hard ; it was an age of taste, wit, and elegance rather than of poetry and of passion. Franklin, like every other writer, felt the influence of the time and spirit ; it is best to accept him in his limitations as well as in his unquestionable greatness. He is one of the sturdily salient figures, both in the life and letters of our early history, and certainly the most considerable man of letters before the year 1800.

It is within the period of the republic, from 1789 to the present time, that the major triumphs of our literature have been won. Indeed, it is almost accurate to say that the writers who have made us famous and taken a fixed place in our galaxy fall after the opening of the nineteenth century.

The exception best worth speaking of after Franklin is that of a man who may fitly be called the Father of American Fiction, Charles Brockden Brown. He was a Philadelphia recluse and scholar, who began to publish as early as 1797, and whose best-known novel, "Wieland," dates from

1798. Brown, though trained for the law, devoted himself to letters, edited magazines, and gave a rather pathetic example of a man who, in a day when literature as a profession hardly existed, tried to live by it, only to die before he was forty. Brown's "Wieland" is still read by students, and the general reader will at least find it interesting and powerful. The man's genius was exceptionally somber; he is the natural forerunner of Poe, a greater master of the weird and terrible. It is instructive to find a writer and thinker thus early making use of psychologic marvels in fiction, yet treating them as did Poe after him in the temper of the scientific investigator. Had Brown's fate fallen on more propitious times, he might have won a secure place in fiction; as it is, his importance historically in the evolution of American novel making is great, for he may be pointed to as the founder of serious fiction in this country. "Wieland" can be had in a good modern edition, with a brief introductory sketch of the author's life.

But better days for literature were near at hand. Brown found himself practically alone and unencouraged in Philadelphia in his effort to produce worthy imaginative writing, but in New York, by the might of his genius, and upon seemingly barren ground, another writer of the early nineteenth century, and a greater, not only sowed seed that should make his name famous, but caused to spring up about him a school of New York literary men, so that the metropolis was regarded for years as the center of such activity. That man was Washington Irving, whom we shall now consider in full as our first American leader of literature.

CHAPTER II

IRVING

THE first American to win not only national but international fame in letters was Washington Irving. The study of our literary leaders therefore fitly and happily begins with him — a man pleasant in his life as he was wholesome in his varied and delightful work.

One can hardly realize to-day, when the incomes of authors are generous, and literature has a social and commercial life in several of our large cities, what an utter lack of center and atmosphere Irving had to face when, very early in the nineteenth century, he essayed to turn from the mercantile pursuits of his family, in which he had been trained and first immersed, to the prosecution of letters both as an interest and a chance of support. New York in the opening decades of the century had little interest in literature; there was no life from which a young aspirant might get encouragement — no salon, no social self-consciousness of the place of letters in an enlightened community. Those who would see this plainly should consult Charles Dudley Warner's excellent brochure on Irving. Men of letters throughout the United States when the young Washington began to write were few and far between; there was no sense of associative life among authors. On the other hand, there was no support of literature on the part of the public,

no inducement to adopt this profession on the part of those possessing indisputable talent. Yet just because of this paucity of rivals, this smallness of the supply as well as of the demand, a man like Irving had his opportunity, seized it, made the demand by the attraction of what he supplied, and became the Father of American Literature.

For it is certainly just to give him this title. He is the first of our authors to give dignity to letters, to produce work that won international recognition — Franklin had foreign fame as a diplomat and scientist rather than man of letters — to found and foster a local school of literature. The Knickerbocker writers, who drew their name from one of Irving's most famous books, we call the group of literary folk who lived in and about New York under the leadership or at least encouraged by the influence of Washington Irving.

This genial autocrat of our early literature had the writing gift in his own individuality rather than by family predisposition. His father was a Scotchman in trade, his mother English, neither of them born in this land. When Irving was born in 1783 in New York City, his father was engaged in mercantile pursuits, and the family was one of plain, comfortable respectability, Presbyterian in its church leanings. Young Washington was a lively lad who at twelve years of age was scribbling verse and prose, and a year later was guilty of a play for amateur performers. His love for the theater was a youthful passion and his biographers give us some amusing incidents connected with the taste; among others, a picture of the stripling attending nine o'clock family prayers and then stealing forth from his bedroom window in order to hurry to the unholy playhouse. He made various excursions in the Sleepy Hollow regions of the Hudson,

and being a rather delicate boy, was given plenty of rope and not too onerous studies, which were conducted by private tutors. At sixteen he was set to the study of law, — the usual story of the born man of letters trying a profession which has stood a sort of nurse to literary men innumerable, literature inevitably weaning them from Coke and Blackstone. Irving, like Lowell later, cared naught for the law, and he still being, at twenty-one years, in indifferent health, his brothers, who were older and successfully engaged in the cutlery business, sent him abroad — a course (as we can now see) eminently wise in view of his career. He spent a year or more in cultured travel, frequenting picture galleries and theaters and meeting people of social position, this serving to polish his natural aptitude for polite intercourse, — for Irving had rare gifts in this direction, and his long life developed them to the full. This social talent had full sway on his return to this country, when he became a figure in the best circles of Gotham and neighboring cities. He was admitted to the New York bar, although it may well be believed that legal cares sat lightly on his soul. Just then, in his brilliant young flush of manhood, a keen sorrow fell on him. He was enamored of a lovely young girl, Maud Hoffman by name, and she had plighted herself to him. At eighteen she died, and although by the gentling hand of time the experience became a fragrant memory, making his wit stingless and giving his pathos a touch which all the world loves, at first Irving suffered deeply. Indeed, in a sense, he never got over the loss. He remained a bachelor throughout his life, and long years afterward referred to this early sorrow as still an unhealed wound of the heart. It is not unduly imaginative to see running through the charm of Washington Irving's essays a certain poetic sensi-

bility toward women, born of this unbroken romance of his early years.

It was while suffering from this grief that Irving began the literary labor which was to bring him fame. He had already tried his hand at journalism in a series of letters for the *Morning Chronicle* (a newspaper owned by his brother Peter) under the pen name of Jonathan Oldstyle. In these, the influence of Addison can be felt in its ease, elegance, and playful humor. His first collected papers, under the title "Salmagundi," were contributed in some twenty numbers of a fortnightly paper during the years 1807-1808, Irving having as associate his eldest brother William and his friend, James K. Paulding. Its aim, like that of the "Spectator" in England a century before, was to display the foibles and fashions of the town in a spirit of gentlemanly good humor and tolerance. This series made a good deal of talk, and the young editor withdrew it at the year's end, apparently never having taken the venture with much seriousness.

The ever memorable and delightful "History of New York," commonly called the "Knickerbocker History," because attributed in the preface and by cunningly concocted advance references in newspapers to Diedrich Knickerbocker, Esq., a supposititious Dutchman, whose mysterious disappearance added just the needed curiosity for contemporary readers, appeared in 1809, when Irving was twenty-six; and was thus the work of a very young man. The spectacle of the author writing the half-finished "History," so full of harmless satire and happy extravaganzas, while his soul yet throbbed with sorrow over his lost love, is one of the dramatic incidents of literary history. The "Knickerbocker History" was an earnest of

Irving's claim to genuine rank in letters, a notification that a new American author of importance had arrived. It became at once popular, and the fact that Irving was the man behind the work was soon an open secret. A success of course strengthened his position in society. The year after its publication he became a silent partner in his brothers' business, and four years later was appointed military aide to Governor Tompkins. This contact with official life also widened his social relations.

Little writing was done after the completion of the "History" for some years. Irving had a great capacity for the light, graceful, and gracious intercourse of the drawing-room. Wine suppers he enjoyed, and club life, or its early equivalent. He had somewhat the effect of an elegant idler during this time ; was a man about town, in the higher sense of the term. To put it plainly, he seemed rather lazy perhaps to his hard-working brothers. But as we look at his life and his work in retrospect, we can easily understand that all this assimilation of social experience was of value to him ; it made possible his later distinctive essay work ; and his genial habit of reading the best, and that widely, was also in the nature of preparation for his graver historical writings. Robert Browning throughout his career enjoyed society in several lands and gave an amount of time and strength thereto which some deemed strange. Yet in his case his most representative work was fed by such experience. It is quite true that Irving did not make a methodical slave of himself in his literary work ; he did not, like Anthony Trollope, write so many words a minute, and write them whether on sea or land. Irving took long periods for rumination, he worked intermittently, at times fiercely, until the task was completed ; then came the reaction. But he

was a man of genius, and it is misleading to dub him lazy, or seek to triangulate his life by a scientist's quadrant.

The "History of New York" was a mock-heroic account of the settlement of Manhattan by the Dutch "from the beginning of the world to the end of the Dutch dynasty." It was begun as a parody of a certain very serious study of New York by one Mitchell, a member of the New York Historical Society, and the intention was that Peter and Washington Irving should together concoct it; but business kept the other from his part, and luckily, as it turned out, Washington executed the work alone. The author represents that the blotted manuscript of the book was left in a New York hostelry by Diedrich, who is described as impoverished, of uncertain temper, and something of a busybody. One smiles to-day doubly in opening the "History": first for the amusement it furnishes in itself, and again as one conjures up a picture of the readers of Irving's time, beginning this solemn nonsense with the expectation of finding improving information. The merit of the work lies in its manner, its delicious exaggeration, its unforgettable pen-pictures of Heinrich Hudson and the other worthies of that early civilization, in the burlesque of social customs, dress, domestic life, and life civic—all thrown off with infectious abandon, with a flowing pen, and (in appearance at least) with an inexhaustible fresh spirit. It is with such gusto that the large men of literature always write; they produce what is to be a classic as a mere *jeu d'esprit*, much as a schoolboy conducts a game on a Saturday's holiday. The literary style in which all this is done varies in accordance with the demand, the required atmosphere; for to create an atmosphere and then to keep it by a congruous flow of language is one of the great secrets of good literature. But

Irving's manner in the "History" may fairly be shown in the following passage ; the reader however being cautioned that our author suffers inevitably from a short selection, inasmuch as his peculiar felicity comes from an effect of quiet charm and grace, of fitness and melody, to be felt in their totality.

The detached, striking, bizarre effects of latter-day literature are not to be sought in him : —

About six miles from the renowned city of the Manhattoes, in that sound or arm of the sea which passes between the mainland and Nassua, on Long Island, there is a narrow strait, where the current is violently compressed between shouldering promontories and horribly perplexed by rocks and shoals. Being, at the best of times, a very violent, impetuous current, it takes these impediments in mighty dudgeon, boiling in whirlpools, brawling and fretting in ripples, raging and roaring in rapids and breakers, and, in short, indulging in all kinds of wrong-headed paroxysms. At such times, woe to any unlucky vessel that ventures within its clutches. This termagant humor, however, prevails only at certain times of tide. At low water, for instance, it is as pacific a stream as you would wish to see ; but as the tide rises, it begins to fret ; at half-tide, it roars with might and main, like a bull bellying for more drink ; but when the tide is full, it relapses into quiet and, for a time, sleeps as soundly as an alderman after dinner. In fact, it may be compared to a quarrelsome toper, who is a peaceable fellow enough when he has no liquor at all or when he has a skinful, but who when half seas over plays the very devil. This mighty, blustering, bullying, hard-drinking little strait was a place of great danger and perplexity to the Dutch navigators of ancient days — hectoring their tub-built barks in a most unruly style, whirling them about in a manner to make any but a Dutchman giddy, and not unfrequently standing them upon rocks and reefs, as it did the famous squadron of Oloffte the Dreamer when seeking a place to found the city of Manhattoes. Whereupon, out of sheer spleen, they denominated it Helle-gat, and solemnly

gave it over to the devil. This appellation has since been aptly rendered into English by the name of Hell-gate and into nonsense by the name of Hurlgate, according to certain foreign intruders, who neither understood Dutch nor English — may St. Nicholas confound them !

Of any one quality, humor predominates in this early masterpiece. And since humor has always been a marked characteristic of American literature, along with sanity, a democratic spirit of brotherhood and a streak of idealism, it is interesting to inquire what are the characteristics of this earliest humorist of distinction on this side of the Atlantic. The present-day reader, accustomed to the broader and sometimes coarser fooling of the newspaper funny man, or to the school of humor for which Artemus Ward stands as father, is likely perhaps to find a writer like Irving a little tame. His fun does not involve verbal play, nor violent antithesis, nor grotesque exaggeration ; nor, in spite of all its freedom in dealing with personalities, is it so daring as the fun of a later dispensation to which nothing is sacred. In this sense it is more in the British tradition. The day had not yet come for the full unfolding of the American sensibility to the ludicrous, developed by contact with democratic and material conditions. Irving begets an inward smile, where we laugh at Mark Twain, or mayhap guffaw at Bill Nye or George Ade, or Mr. Dooley. But the "Knickerbocker History" is very genuine humor, nevertheless, and more's the pity if our jaded taste fails to respond to it ; such a result should suggest the possibility that food too highly spiced unfits for that which is more eupeptic.

After the "History," Irving did nothing of importance as a writer for ten years, from 1809 to 1819, in which latter year "The Sketch Book" began to appear. To be sure, he wrote

sundry articles for a magazine he edited for a while, but for the most part this was a period of observation, development, maturing. In 1815 he went abroad for a sojourn that stretched itself out to seventeen years of travel and residence. He was a year or so over thirty when he went, a man of nearly fifty when he returned. He left his native land partly because there were reasons connected with his business which called for his attention there ; partly, too, because he liked the old country, much in him naturally responding to the social brilliancy and culture-steeped traditions of the older civilization. Friends he had made across the water urged him to come ; and there was nothing of compelling importance either in the way of family ties or business cares to bid him remain in America. And so during these fruitful years in his youthful prime and dowered in many ways for enlightened social communion, Irving saw and wrote — and eventually conquered.

His wanderings were wide. The first five years of the seventeen were spent in Great Britain — much of the time in the English capital ; then for the most of six years, from 1820 to 1826, he was on the Continent ; for three years in Spain, then back to England again as secretary of the United States legation. This prolonged residence abroad had a very great influence on Irving's life, his thought, and hence his literary work. He absorbed the spirit and essence of English social life, old and new ; and those two typical volumes of essays, "The Sketch Book" and "Bracebridge Hall," were largely the result. He browsed in foreign libraries, and derived inspiration from the art treasures of Spain, and history like his "Columbus" and "The Alhambra" were given to the world. It is not too much to say that his European experience changed his life work as an author,

and yet, unlike other Americans upon whom foreign sojourn has worked more than a sea change, Irving's genius never lost its distinctively American quality. Henry James by such a residence has ceased to be an American author in any sense. Bret Harte, on the other hand, in a similar residence, continued to the day of his death to write stories that spoke alone of the native soil. To retain the domestic flavor under such circumstances is as well for an author as for a grape or pear.

Everywhere he went abroad Irving was received with cordiality and kindness : he was sought after, and deservedly so, for his manners were of the best, his personality charming, and his growing literary reputation such as to remove social barriers. There is testimony and to spare of the good time he had, the pleasant impression he made ; many a reference in letter or memoir is preserved to prove it. He met familiarly the notables of letters and society : in view of the period and Irving's plebeian origin this speaks eloquently for his winning qualities.

Irving seemed to need the pressure of necessity to produce literature. When, because of the hard times brought on by the War of 1812, the business houses of New York were tottering and unstable, Irving had tried magazine editorship to help the house of Irving Brothers, though with little success ; in England, half a dozen years later, came to him news of the failure of the firm, and the loyal silent partner bethought him how he might help. Editorial work, with handsome remuneration, he refused ; he sat down and made a permanent contribution to American literature by writing "The Sketch Book," or, to give it its full title, "The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent," the seven parts of which appeared during 1819 and 1820. It may be here

remarked parenthetically that two-thirds of the standard literature of the world has been produced under some form of practical pressure ; Grub Street has done more for letters than Vanity Fair — a reflection perhaps on man's natural laziness, but on the whole enheartening in its suggestion of the wholesome influence of work under necessity.

Irving was winningly modest in his feeling about the merit of "The Sketch Book." He only wished, he said, "to blow a flute accompaniment in the National Concert" ; yet he did a distinctive and undying thing, because it was in him to do it, and neither foreign residence nor themes often quite un-American could hide certain underlying qualities which give the book its native smack. Then, too, along with essays that are entirely and charmingly British, that seem to come from the heart of an Oliver Goldsmith, — that on Stratford-on-Avon, for example, or the lovely paper on Westminster Abbey, — are those two immortal idyls of the Hudson River, "Rip Van Winkle," "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow," whose very names stir the imagination and warm the heart of every good American. By writing these tales, genial, sunny, touched with delicate fancy and with a half serious face toward the legendary which is altogether delightful, Irving put once and for all the seal of poetic imagination upon certain noble things which did not before possess this double charm of nature and art. Hereafter, the Hudson became his river even more than it was Heinrich's of old — a stately stream, around which, as around the German Rhine, hover mythic shapes, and down whose waterways the wings of poetry and romance, like magic sails, bear the awakened souls of men. And how typically and finely American they are, too, in scene and character, in humor and pathos ! The fact that Rip has for a generation served in

play form as an exponent of the art of the most beloved and favored of living American comedians, has of course greatly strengthened its hold upon the public. But the tale, as told by Irving, will always be a favorite and has no need of the stage to give it a place in popular regard.

But judged as literary product, and for their gentle, lovely humanity, other of the sketches making up this welcome addition to essay literature are, although placed upon British shores, full of Irving's quality. "The Broken Heart," "The Widow and Her Son," and such-like narratives seem a little oversentimental to us to-day; they appeal to the taste for the pathetic, with small attempt to disguise the working of the pumps—the method of Dickens at times, as in the famous scene of the death of Little Nell. But those sketches, even the most deliciously mournful of them, were immensely liked in their day; as Macaulay wept over "Little Dombey," so did Byron over "The Broken Heart." These papers, however, were not the most durable part of the book which, aside from the inimitable Hudson River tales already mentioned, is less noteworthy for the stories than for the essays, of which the Stratford paper is a classic example. Tourists who visit the Red Horse Inn, in Shakespeare's native town, are shown the room in which he wrote, the big chair he sat in, the poker wherewith he stirred the fire into a cheery blaze, the very pen he used. It is one of the minor magics of a place so prepotent in its supreme magic of the master bard. Irving shaded off with utmost ease from the essay to the short story; it would hardly be too much to say that he created the short tale in English. Dickens wrote this form, now so vastly cultivated and popular, somewhat later; Cooper had no success in it. But to Washington Irving it was a natural medium for imaginative

expression. He is first and foremost an essayist ; by which I mean, it is not so much the subject he deals with as the deft and delicate way he handles it, which gives him his charm. Very rarely is his tale a story for story's sake ; it is a mood, a portrayal of character ; for the best effect, a single one ; it is a picture, an impression. There are intimate relations, therefore, between the essay and fiction in the form of the short story. In the early eighteenth century, the English essay was originated by Addison and Steele in the "Spectator" ; yet the most famous series in that immortal journal was made up of the Roger de Coverley sketches which are a kind of fiction, certainly, perhaps as good an example as literature can show of the merging of essay and fiction. And as direct outcome of all this essay activity, the modern novel sprang, Cadmus-like, into full life before the middle of that century.

So with Irving. Influenced by these early essayists, Addison and Steele, and by Oliver Goldsmith a generation later, he remained an essayist to the end of his days. Yet he founded the short story, because that form is but the essay (or can be) with a little more of the fictive, of objectivity and of dramatized character — the essayist, instead of talking so frankly about himself, talks about some imagined character who is, as likely as not, only his *alter ego*, behind which the real speaker hides. This, no doubt, is what Mr. Howells has in mind when he speaks of Dr. Holmes's "Autocrat" as an example of the dramatized essay — something half fiction, half essay, Holmes being essentially an essayist in his prose.

"The Sketch Book," then, is one of Irving's happiest and most representative works, a contribution to American literature much beloved and admired. Two years later came a

second book of essays, "Bracebridge Hall," as typical and as well known, if less attractive to the American reader; perhaps only so because the papers are all of English themes, reflecting more steadily than did the earlier volume Irving's British experiences. But we must not make too much of boundary lines in literature, and these papers are wonderfully sympathetic, graceful, and genial studies of the older English life, which was felt by Irving in all its charm and suggestion, as it has been by very few of the native British writers. There is a leisureliness in the movement, a quaint humor and sentiment, an effect of the picturesque for its own sake, especially refreshing in our day of haste, strenuousness, and in some quarters suspicion even of innocent enjoyment.

Here again Irving's gift for the sketch finds full play, and some of the choicest things in the collection belong to this phase of fiction. We may take the "Stout Gentleman" as a happy example, and it is reproduced at the end of this study of Irving and his work, although, perhaps, not so well known as American sketches, like the "Rip Van Winkle" legend, or that of "Sleepy Hollow." The sketch of this humorously seen gentleman illustrates the truth of what has been said of the born essayist, caring more for the study of character, for impression, atmosphere, and style than for story interest. There is hardly a story at all to this inimitable picture; we do not hear the stout gentleman speak; we do not even see him; his vanishing coat tails as he steps into his cab in the morning is our nearest approach to vision. And yet what a keen interest is aroused in his personality, as the narrator of the incident describes his coming to the inn, and the impression he makes upon all concerned. How clearly, too, we see that inn reading room, and hear

the boots call out the name of the mysterious stranger ! It is all so picturesque, genial, enjoyable. Every page is mel-
lowed by a rich humanity. The reader feels the wholesome, sweet personality of the writer behind the scenes, and is glad to look upon a bit of life through his all-seeing eyes that have in them the good-humored twinkle of a lover of his kind. We can think of no one in English literature, save perhaps Dickens, a conjurer in this kind, who could have made so much out of little.

The "Bracebridge Hall" sketches draw material, not only from England, but from Spain and Normandy, and from among the treasures of Dutch tradition. Several love tales are among them, and probably these the modern reader will enjoy less than such a thing as "Dolph Heyliger" in the way of a native theme : or, for a blend of love and action set in a framework of Spanish romance, "The Student of Salamanca." These sketches are thoroughly Irvingesque in the way in which they blend kindly satire with touches of tender sentiment and picturesque description, — a sort of April day effect of smiles and tears, combined in pleasurable proportion. At times, Irving's heavier pathos, as in the earlier works, possesses a too conscious and prolonged appeal to the lachrymose gland. But his audience was readier for a cry than ours of to-day, and less insistent on psychologic accuracy.

Irving followed up "Bracebridge Hall" with "The Tales of a Traveller," in which the form is steadily that of narrative fiction. For this very reason, and because Irving was so surely an essayist, the work, as a whole, is less typical of his genius than the two volumes of sketches preceding it. Yet these tales can be highly enjoyed to-day, and contain certain things of special interest for American readers.

Once again the writer uses the winding waters and wooded heights of the Hudson, or picturesque old Manhattan, as backgrounds for the story. One such is "The Money Digger." The collection also includes the capital satiric sketches of the Bohemian literary life entitled "Buckthorne and His Friends." As good as anything in the book, and perhaps best known, is the tale called "Wolfert's Roost," a fine specimen of the author's imaginative molding of a native local tradition.

Upon these three books of essay and narrative, along with the "Knickerbocker History," Irving's fame solidly rests. But his three years' Spanish residence and the studies he made during it led to a series of historical writings second only in importance to the "Sketch Book" work. He began with the publication of his "Life of Columbus," still, despite the great amount of investigation since put upon the mighty Genoese in the modern critical spirit, a book of value, because it gives, whatever corrections are to be made in the light of new information, a rounded and vital presentment of his subject. This "Life" is in many respects the best to put in the hands of the intelligent reading public. Irving was primarily a man of letters; in writing history he was painstaking in his gathering of available historical material, but cared most to clothe fact with the flesh and blood of warm and moving words, pictures, episodes. Hence here, as elsewhere in his biographies and histories, the reader gets above all a vivid sense of the dramatic value of the wonderful career of Christopher Columbus—which surely should be the highest aim of the historian. Three years later, the volume called "Voyages and Discoveries of the Companions of Columbus" carried on the study in the same spirit; between the two came a chronicle of the "Conquest of

Granada" and a year later "The Alhambra," his masterpiece in this field. Irving found in the old Spanish tradition a theme fragrant with romance, rich and scintillant in color, and lending itself admirably to his peculiar method of imaginative interpretation. Upon a framework of history he weaves a succession of vivid scenes of stately and pathetic personages and eloquent descriptions until the whole glows like a great Oriental rug. Fact and fancy are both in the woof of the texture, but the magic of the narrator makes it all a wonder tale, befitting the splendor of that melancholy, yet lovely palace, memorial of a proud, unhappy race.

Directly after the publication of "The Alhambra" Washington Irving returned to his native land, a man well along in years and in the full summer of his reputation, an American citizen who had been courted by society abroad and publicly honored there. He had received a Royal Society medal and an LL.D. from Oxford. It was natural that his fellow-Americans should have received him with acclaim, for he was their one author to be recognized as an important figure in letters by transatlantic critics. In honoring him Americans honored themselves.

He made a tour of the southeast and was greeted everywhere with enthusiastic admiration. Then he settled down in the pleasant cottage on the Hudson, at Tarrytown, called Sunnyside, as if in recognition of the cheery nature of its master; a dwelling which has now become one of the historic haunts and literary shrines of the land. This Hudson River residence was the realization of Irving's often expressed desire for a retiring and home place upon the banks of a stream, to whose very name he has lent a new loveliness. There has been talk of late of acquiring Sunnyside as a memorial which the people of the United States may visit;

if it were feasible, this would be wise, since it is by these signs and tokens of our great men that a people's self-respect and instinct for hero-worship and patriotism are kept alive. Here, for the remainder of his life, a term of a quarter century or more, he resided, save for a break of four years, when in 1842 he went abroad again to represent the United States at the Court of Spain — a selection peculiarly fitting in view of his writings on the past and present of that land. He filled the post to the signal satisfaction of both countries, his social tact of course standing him in good stead. Irving's life at Tarrytown was a genial one; friends and relatives visited him, and he often was seen in the streets of New York, the picture of a well-to-do, benignant gentleman of the old school, with a touch of the quaintness of the elder days in garb and carriage. His disposition seems to have been a happy mingling of affability and dignity. When the farewell dinner to Charles Dickens was given in New York City, upon the occasion of the Englishman's visit to the United States, Irving presided, as naturally our representative in letters. For long he was the foremost of American makers of literature.

His declining years were smooth and sunny, for not only were Irving's outward circumstances easy, but his was a temperament to insure happiness. It is pleasant to think of the peaceful Indian summer of his days in contrast with the belligerent and strenuous career of Cooper, or the tragic brevity of Poe's end. Nor was his peace idleness; much writing was done in the Tarrytown library, minor, to be sure, for the most part, but testifying that his right hand had not lost its cunning, and some of it still of the choice vintage of his mid-prime. His "Crayon Miscellany," in which he used the old sobriquet, embraced sketches in which his

western travels in the United States, his English experience, his Spanish wanderings and his likings for the Hudson River and other native legends were all levied upon. His contributions to the *Knickerbocker Magazine* were published in book form, and some of them have the flavor which is so relishably Irving's ; while several important biographies were also produced. One of these was "Mahomet and His Successors." Another, and better, the "Life of Washington," was only completed the year of the author's death. The first great American had put his hand in blessing on the boy Irving's head, and the proud mother had named the child after him ; in the fullness of time the debt was thus repaid. The charming "Life of Goldsmith" — the one English writer whom Irving most suggests — rounds out the list of the biographies.

In 1859, at the age of seventy-five, Irving died in his country place, having lived long, and to such effect that his place in American literature is as secure, if not so high, as that of any other American writer. His personality had always been of a kind to attract and hold friends. A connection wrote of his appearance : "He had dark gray eyes, a handsome straight nose, a broad, high, full forehead, and a small mouth. His smile was exceedingly genial, lighting up his whole face, and rendering it very attractive." In the "Easy Chair" of *Harper's Magazine*, George William Curtis spoke thus of the impression made upon him by Irving late in life : "He might have been seen on an autumnal afternoon tripping with an elastic step along Broadway with low quartered shoes neatly tied, and a Talma cloak, a short garment that hangs from the shoulders like the cape of a coat. There was a chirping, cheery, old-school air in his appearance which was undeniably Dutch, and most har-

monious with the associations of his writings. He seemed, indeed, to have stepped out of his own books ; and the cordial grace and humor of his address, if he stopped for a passing chat, were delightfully characteristic."

He had prospered in all ways. He had earned more than \$200,000 by his pen, a sum rarely equaled even in these better-paid times. He had seen, ere he passed away, a complete and handsome definitive edition of his work, a practical testament to his importance as a writer. A bachelor throughout his life, he had been cherished and loved by countless friends in several lands ; and his readers he could number by tens of thousands. As near as a mortal may, Washington Irving had lived a life that was blameless and beautiful.

It would be the impulse of a false patriotism to represent him as in the front rank of the writers of the world ; but he is a very distinctive, charming, and important figure in our native literary development ; so much an artist, and so wholesomely good a man, that however literary fashions may change, he cannot be ignored. He does not loom so large in the modern gaze as he did at the time of his death ; but this is only another way of saying that a great deal has since been accomplished, that a group of remarkable New England writers has since come and gone. Although Irving was sometimes attacked by contemporary criticism for his lack of moral earnestness, his tone and influence were perfectly sound and sweet. Nor is he to be blamed for being imitative for the excellent reason that at the time he wrote, American literature was inevitably nearer in spirit and tradition to the parent British than it is at the present time. It is saner criticism to draw attention to the remarkable degree in which Washington Irving, despite his

period, his obvious sympathies with the English literary past and the English models he frankly followed, did nevertheless retain the hall-mark of a truly native quality. It is a comfort to come into contact with so healthy a personality as is revealed alike in the life and the literary work of this first of our large and worthy makers of American letters.

THE STOUT GENTLEMAN

A STAGECOACH ROMANCE

"I'll cross it, though it blast me!" — *Hamlet*

It was a rainy Sunday, in the gloomy month of November. I had been detained, in the course of a journey, by a slight indisposition, from which I was recovering; but was still feverish, and obliged to keep within doors all day, in an inn of the small town of Derby. A wet Sunday in a country inn!—whoever has had the luck to experience one can alone judge of my situation. The rain pattered against the casements; the bells tolled for church with a melancholy sound. I went to the windows, in quest of something to amuse the eye; but it seemed as if I had been placed completely out of the reach of all amusement. The windows of my bedroom looked out among tiled roofs and stacks of chimneys, while those of my sitting-room commanded a full view of the stable yard. I know of nothing more calculated to make a man sick of this world, than a stable yard on a rainy day. The place was littered with wet straw, that had been kicked about by travelers and stable boys. In one corner was a stagnant pool of water, surrounding an island of muck; there were several half-drowned fowls crowded together under a cart, among which was a miserable, crestfallen cock, drenched out of all life and spirit; his drooping tail matted, as it were, into a single feather, along which the water trickled from his back; near the cart was a half-dozing cow chewing the cud, and standing patiently to be rained on, with wreaths of vapor rising from

her reeking hide; a wall-eyed horse, tired of the loneliness of the stable, was poking his spectral head out of a window, with the rain dripping on it from the eaves; an unhappy cur, chained to a dog house hard by, uttered something every now and then, between a bark and a yelp; a drab of a kitchen wench tramped backwards and forwards through the yard in pattens, looking as sulky as the weather itself; everything, in short, was comfortless and forlorn, excepting a crew of hardened ducks, assembled like boon companions round a puddle, and making a riotous noise over their liquor.

I was lonely and listless, and wanted amusement. My room soon became insupportable. I abandoned it, and sought what is technically called the travelers' room. This is a public room set apart at most inns for the accommodation of a class of wayfarers called travelers, or riders; a kind of commercial knights-errant, who are incessantly scouring the kingdom in gigs, on horseback, or by coach. They are the only successors that I know of, at the present day, to the knights-errant of yore. They lead the same kind of roving, adventurous life, only changing the lance for a driving whip, the buckler for a pattern card, and the coat of mail for an upper Benjamin. Instead of vindicating the charms of peerless beauty, they rove about spreading the fame and standing of some substantial tradesman or manufacturer, and are ready at any time to bargain in his name; it being the fashion nowadays to trade, instead of fight, with one another. As the room of the hostel, in the good old fighting times, would be hung round at night with the armor of wayworn warriors, such as coats of mail, falchions, and yawning helmets; so the travelers' room is garnished with the harnessing of their successors, with box coats, whips of all kinds, spurs, gaiters, and oilcloth-covered hats.

I was in hopes of finding some of these worthies to talk with, but was disappointed. There were, indeed, two or three in the room; but I could make nothing of them. One was just finishing his breakfast, quarreling with his bread and butter, and huffing the waiter; another buttoned on a pair of gaiters, with many execrations at Boots for not having cleaned his shoes

well ; a third sat drumming on the table with his fingers, and looking at the rain as it streamed down the window glass ; they all appeared infected by the weather, and disappeared, one after the other, without exchanging a word.

I sauntered to the window, and stood gazing at the people picking their way to church, with petticoats hoisted mid-leg high, and dripping umbrellas. The bell ceased to toll, and the streets became silent. I then amused myself with watching the daughters of a tradesman opposite ; who, being confined to the house for fear of wetting their Sunday finery, played off their charms at the front windows, to fascinate the chance tenants of the inn. They at length were summoned away by a vigilant, vinegar-faced mother, and I had nothing further from without to amuse me.

What was I to do to pass away the long-lived day ? I was sadly nervous and lonely ; and everything about an inn seems calculated to make a dull day ten times duller. Old newspapers, smelling of beer and tobacco smoke, and which I had already read half a dozen times — good-for-nothing books, that were worse than rainy weather. I bored myself to death with an old volume of the *Lady's Magazine*. I read all the commonplace names of ambitious travelers scrawled on the panes of glass ; the eternal families of the Smiths, and the Browns, and the Jacksons, and the Johnsons, and all the other sons ; and I deciphered several scraps of fatiguing inn-window poetry which I have met with in all parts of the world.

The day continued lowering and gloomy ; the slovenly, ragged, spongy clouds drifted heavily along ; there was no variety even in the rain ; it was one dull, continued, monotonous patter — patter — patter, excepting that now and then I was enlivened by the idea of a brisk shower, from the rattling of the drops upon a passing umbrella.

It was quite *refreshing* (if I may be allowed a hackneyed phrase of the day) when, in the course of the morning, a horn blew, and a stagecoach whirled through the street, with outside passengers stuck all over it, cowering under cotton umbrellas, and seethed together, and reeking with the steams of wet box coats and upper Benjamins.

The sound brought out from their lurking places a crew of vagabond boys, and vagabond dogs, and the carrot-headed hostler, and that nondescript animal ycleped Boots, and all the other vagabond race that infest the purlieus of an inn; but the bustle was transient; the coach again whirled on its way; and boy and dog, and hostler and Boots, all slunk back again to their holes; the street again became silent, and the rain continued to rain on. In fact, there was no hope of its clearing up; the barometer pointed to rainy weather; mine hostess' tortoise-shell cat sat by the fire washing her face, and rubbing her paws over her ears; and, on referring to the almanac, I found a direful prediction stretching from the top of the page to the bottom through the whole month, "expect — much — rain — about — this — time."

I was dreadfully hipped. The hours seemed as if they would never creep by. The very ticking of the clock became irksome. At length the stillness of the house was interrupted by the ringing of a bell. Shortly after, I heard the voice of a waiter at the bar: "The stout gentleman in No. 13 wants his breakfast. Tea and bread and butter with ham and eggs; the eggs not to be too much done."

In such a situation as mine, every incident is of importance. Here was a subject of speculation presented to my mind, and ample exercise for my imagination. I am prone to paint pictures to myself, and on this occasion I had some materials to work upon. Had the guest upstairs been mentioned as Mr. Smith, or Mr. Brown, or Mr. Jackson, or Mr. Johnson, or merely as "the gentleman in No. 13," it would have been a perfect blank to me. I should have thought nothing of it; but "The stout gentleman!" — the very name had something in it of the picturesque. It at once gave the size; it embodied the personage to my mind's eye, and my fancy did the rest.

He was stout, or, as some term it, lusty; in all probability, therefore, he was advanced in life, some people expanding as they grow old. By his breakfasting rather late, and in his own room, he must be a man accustomed to live at his ease, and above the necessity of early rising; no doubt a round, rosy, lusty old gentleman.

There was another violent ringing. The stout gentleman was impatient for his breakfast. He was evidently a man of importance; "well-to-do in the world"; accustomed to be promptly waited upon; of a keen appetite, and a little cross when hungry; "perhaps," thought I, "he may be some London Alderman; or who knows but he may be a Member of Parliament?"

The breakfast was sent up and there was a short interval of silence; he was, doubtless, making the tea. Presently there was a violent ringing, and before it could be answered, another ringing still more violent. "Bless me! what a choleric old gentleman!" The waiter came down in a huff. The butter was rancid, the eggs were overdone, the ham was too salt:—the stout gentleman was evidently nice in his eating; one of those who eat and growl, and keep the waiter on the trot, and live in a state militant with the household.

The hostess got into a fume. I should observe that she was a brisk, coquettish woman; a little of a shrew, and something of a slammerkin, but very pretty withal; with a nincompoop for a husband, as shrews are apt to have. She rated the servants roundly for their negligence in sending up so bad a breakfast, but said not a word against the stout gentleman; by which I clearly perceived that he must be a man of consequence, entitled to make a noise and to give trouble at a country inn. Other eggs, and ham, and bread and butter, were sent up. They appeared to be more graciously received; at least there was no further complaint.

I had not made many turns about the travelers' room, when there was another ringing. Shortly afterwards there was a stir and an inquest about the house. The stout gentleman wanted the *Times* or the *Chronicle* newspaper. I set him down, therefore, for a Whig; or rather, from his being so absolute and lordly where he had a chance, I suspected him of being a Radical. Hunt, I had heard, was a large man; "who knows," thought I, "but it is Hunt himself!"

My curiosity began to be awakened. I inquired of the waiter who was this stout gentleman that was making all the stir; but I could get no information: nobody seemed to know his name.

The landlords of bustling inns seldom trouble their heads about the names or occupations of their transient guests. The color of a coat, the shape or size of the person, is enough to suggest a traveling name. It is either the tall gentleman, or the short gentleman, or the gentleman in black, or the gentleman in snuff color; or, as in the present instance, the stout gentleman. A designation of the kind once hit on answers every purpose, and saves all further inquiry.

Rain — rain — rain! pitiless, ceaseless rain! No such thing as putting a foot out of doors, and no occupation nor amusement within. By and by I heard some one walking overhead. It was in the stout gentleman's room. He evidently was a large man, by the heaviness of his tread; and an old man, from his wearing such creaking soles. "He is doubtless," thought I, "some rich old square-toes, of regular habits, and is now taking exercise after breakfast."

I now read all the advertisements of coaches and hotels that were stuck about the mantelpiece. The *Lady's Magazine* had become an abomination to me; it was as tedious as the day itself. I wandered out, not knowing what to do, and ascended again to my room. I had not been there long, when there was a squall from a neighboring bedroom. A door opened and slammed violently; a chambermaid, that I had remarked for having a ruddy, good-humored face, went down stairs in a violent flurry. The stout gentleman had been rude to her.

This sent the whole host of my deductions to the deuce in a moment. This unknown personage could not be an old gentleman; for old gentlemen are not apt to be so obstreperous to chambermaids. He could not be a young gentleman; for young gentlemen are not apt to inspire such indignation. He must be a middle-aged man, and confounded ugly into the bargain, or the girl would not have taken the matter in such terrible dudgeon. I confess I was sorely puzzled.

In a few minutes I heard the voice of my landlady. I caught a glance of her as she came tramping upstairs; her face glowing, her cap flaring, her tongue wagging the whole way. "She'd have no such doings in her house, she'd warrant! If gentlemen did

spend money freely, it was no rule. She'd have no servant maids of hers treated in that way, when they were about their work, that's what she wouldn't !”

As I hate squabbles, particularly with women, and above all with pretty women, I slunk back into my room, and partly closed the door ; but my curiosity was too much excited not to listen. The landlady marched intrepidly to the enemy's citadel, and entered it with a storm ; the door closed after her. I heard her voice in high windy clamor for a moment or two. Then it gradually subsided, like a gust of wind in a garret ; then there was a laugh ; then I heard nothing more.

After a little while, my landlady came out with an odd smile on her face, adjusting her cap, which was a little on one side. As she went downstairs, I heard the landlord ask her what was the matter ; she said, “ Nothing at all, only the girl's a fool.” — I was more than ever perplexed what to make of this unaccountable personage, who could put a good-natured chambermaid in a passion, and send away a termagant landlady in smiles. He could not be so old, nor cross, nor ugly either.

I had to go to work at his picture again, and to paint him entirely different. I now set him down for one of those stout gentlemen that are frequently met with, swaggering about the doors of country inns. Moist, merry fellows, in Belcher handkerchiefs, whose bulk is a little assisted by malt liquors. Men who have seen the world, and been sworn at Highgate ; who are used to tavern life ; up to all the tricks of tapsters, and knowing in the ways of sinful publicans. Free livers on a small scale ; who are prodigal within the compass of a guinea ; who call all the waiters by name, tousle the maids, gossip with the landlady at the bar, and prose over a pint of port, or a glass of negus, after dinner.

The morning wore away in forming these and similar surmises. As fast as I wove one system of belief, some movement of the unknown would completely overturn it, and throw all my thoughts again into confusion. Such are the solitary operations of a feverish mind. I was, as I have said, extremely nervous ; and the continual meditation on the concerns of this invisible

personage began to have its effect:—I was getting a fit of the fidgets.

Dinner-time came. I hoped the stout gentleman might dine in the travelers' room, and that I might at length get a view of his person; but no—he had dinner served in his own room. What could be the meaning of this solitude and mystery? He could not be a Radical; there was something too aristocratical in thus keeping himself apart from the rest of the world, and condemning himself to his own dull company throughout a rainy day. And then, too, he lived too well for a discontented politician. He seemed to expatiate on a variety of dishes, and to sit over his wine like a jolly friend of good living. Indeed, my doubts on this head were soon at an end; for he could not have finished his first bottle before I could faintly hear him humming a tune; and on listening, I found it to be "God save the King." 'Twas plain, then, he was no Radical, but a faithful subject: one who grew loyal over his bottle, and was ready to stand by king and constitution, when he could stand by nothing else. But who could he be? My conjectures began to run wild. Was he not some personage of distinction, traveling incog.? "God knows!" said I, at my wit's end; "it may be one of the royal family for aught I know, for they are all stout gentlemen!"

The weather continued rainy. The mysterious unknown kept his room, and, as far as I could judge, his chair, for I did not hear him move. In the meantime, as the day advanced, the travelers' room began to be frequented. Some, who had just arrived, came in buttoned up in box coats; others came home, who had been dispersed about the town. Some took their dinners, and some their tea. Had I been in a different mood, I should have found entertainment in studying this peculiar class of men. There were two especially, who were regular wags of the road, and up to all the standing jokes of travelers. They had a thousand sly things to say to the waiting maid, whom they called Louisa, and Ethelinda, and a dozen other fine names, changing the name every time, and chuckling amazingly at their own waggyery. My mind, however, had become com-

pletely engrossed by the stout gentleman. He had kept my fancy in chase during a long day, and it was not now to be diverted from the scent.

The evening gradually wore away. The travelers read the papers two or three times over. Some drew round the fire, and told long stories about their horses, about their adventures, their overturns, and breakings down. They discussed the credits of different merchants and different inns; and the two wags told several choice anecdotes of pretty chambermaids, and kind landladies. All this passed as they were quietly taking what they called their nightcaps, that is to say, strong glasses of brandy and water and sugar, or some other mixture of the kind; after which they one after another rang for "Boots" and the chambermaid, and walked off to bed in old shoes cut down into marvelously uncomfortable slippers.

There was now only one man left; a short-legged, long-bodied, plethoric fellow, with a very large, sandy head. He sat by himself, with a glass of port wine negus, and a spoon; sipping and stirring, and meditating and sipping, until nothing was left but the spoon. He gradually fell asleep bolt upright in his chair, with the empty glass standing before him; and the candle seemed to fall asleep too, for the wick grew long, and black, and cabbaged at the end, and dimmed the little light that remained in the chamber. The gloom that now prevailed was contagious. Around hung the shapeless, and almost spectral, box coats, of departed travelers, long since buried in deep sleep. I only heard the ticking of the clock, with the deep-drawn breathings of the sleeping toppers, and the drippings of the rain, drop—drop—drop, from the eaves of the house. The church bells chimed midnight. All at once the stout gentleman began to walk overhead, pacing slowly backwards and forwards. There was something extremely awful in all this, especially to one in my state of nerves. These ghastly greatcoats, these guttural breathings, and the creaking footsteps of this mysterious being. His steps grew fainter and fainter, and at length died away. I could bear it no longer. I was wound up to the desperation of a hero of romance. "Be he who or what he

may," said I to myself, "I'll have a sight of him!" I seized a chamber candle, and hurried up to No. 13. The door stood ajar. I hesitated—I entered: the room was deserted. There stood a large, broad-bottomed elbow chair at a table, on which was an empty tumbler, and a *Times* newspaper, and the room smelt powerfully of Stilton cheese.

The mysterious stranger had evidently but just retired. I turned off, sorely disappointed, to my room, which had been changed to the front of the house. As I went along the corridor, I saw a large pair of boots, with dirty, waxed tops, standing at the door of a bedchamber. They doubtless belonged to the unknown; but it would not do to disturb so redoubtable a personage in his den; he might discharge a pistol, or something worse, at my head. I went to bed, therefore, and lay awake half the night in a terrible nervous state; and even when I fell asleep, I was still haunted in my dreams by the idea of the stout gentleman and his wax-topped boots.

I slept rather late the next morning, and was awakened by some stir and bustle in the house, which I could not at first comprehend; until getting more awake, I found there was a mail coach starting from the door. Suddenly there was a cry from below, "The gentleman has forgot his umbrella! look for the gentleman's umbrella in No. 13!" I heard an immediate scampering of a chambermaid along the passage, and a shrill reply as she ran, "Here it is! here's the gentleman's umbrella!"

The mysterious stranger then was on the point of setting off. This was the only chance I should ever have of knowing him. I sprang out of bed, scrambled to the window, snatched aside the curtains, and just caught a glimpse of the rear of a person getting in at the coach door. The skirts of a brown coat parted behind, and gave me a full view of the broad disk of a pair of drab breeches. The door closed—"all right!" was the word—the coach whirled off:—and that was all I ever saw of the stout gentleman!

CHAPTER III

COOPER

IN comparison with other of the early makers of American literature the reputation of James Fenimore Cooper has diminished disproportionately since his death. In the case of his contemporaries, Irving and Poe, the former has lost nothing during the past fifty years, in critical regard ; the latter has immeasurably gained. Cooper, on the other hand, because of the carelessness of his literary methods and the keener appreciation in our day of the defects of technique his work unquestionably shows, has, as was inevitable, come to be regarded largely as a writer for boys, — by some critics at the beginning of the twentieth century he hardly seems to be taken seriously ; there is an effect of patronage in references to him. We are speaking, of course, of the critical view of his work, the estimate which endeavors to give him his due place in the bead roll of American letters. His popularity with the general reader is another matter.

Cooper is still secure in a certain popularity ; for the breath of life is in some of his stories, and all readers (and surely their name is legion) who like stir and change and excitement in their fiction are likely to swear by him. But, more than this, Cooper has no small significance in our American fiction because he was a stalwart pioneer in a day when such a one had to blaze his own trail ; and because, moreover, he

led in the use of distinctively and attractively native material for his books. Certainly praise is due one who had the perception to see the great value of the Indian for the purposes of literary art, and who had the ability to set him picturesquely amidst his native wilds, to show him in his more heroic aspects, whether he be bravely terrible in war-paint, agile for the hunt, or romantic, as he unbends to love beside the far waters of his wood-girdled streams. Cooper is for these reasons still a striking figure in the literary Pantheon. Less perfect in his art than Irving, he is yet in a sense a writer of larger popularity and of more obvious vigor.

He was born in 1789, half a dozen years after Irving, at Burlington, New Jersey, where the Coopers were temporarily residing, while their lands in New York State were being made ready for occupancy—the region which he was again and again to portray in his romances. His mother was of Swedish extraction, and his middle name, Fenimore, which he assumed in maturity, being baptized simply “James,” was the name of her family. His father was of Quaker stock, a congressman, a judge, a man of energy and ability who, after the American Revolution, acquired large tracts of land on Otsego Lake (Otsego Lake it is still written) in New York State, and according to the custom of the American pioneer, gradually made the region habitable, so that the town of Cooperstown remains as a monument of the fact. Thither, when the little James was a year old, the family moved. In the preface of his novel “The Pioneers,” Cooper tells how “in 1785 the author’s father, who had extensive tracts of land in this wilderness, arrived with a party of surveyors. At the commencement of the following year the settlement began. . . . The

author was brought an infant into this valley, and all his first impressions were here obtained."

Thus the young Cooper had an early environment of much moment to a future romancer. He was reared on the edge of a wilderness, fellow of the sun, the wind, and the open. That great good place, outdoors, was his playground, and the splendid primitive things of Nature were at his very threshold. It seems strange to-day to think of central New York State as an unsettled waste, a region of woodsmen, untilled land, and pathless forests. Yet so it was a hundred and odd years ago, and to the early American a pilgrimage to the Mohawk Valley seemed infinitely more remote and adventurous than would in our time a Wyoming hunting trip. Otsego Hall, as the large house and estate of the Cooper family was called, gave the lad a stately home in which a large and easy manner of living was instituted; while without, all the world between sky and earth was his to roam in, and for the first half of his life, Cooper — in sharp contrast with men of letters who are of the study and the midnight lamp — passed his time outside of confining walls. It seems as if something of the largeness, the liberal gift of Nature, entered into his work because of this good fortune of home and education.

Cooper's schooling was thus far more of Nature than from books. He attended the village academy, to be sure, but he early absorbed the valuable knowledge that is to be derived from contact with men rather than from books, from the rough woodsmen and trappers and guides who frequented this region. Later his education was continued at Albany, where he was admitted into the family of an English clergyman who fitted him for Yale College, which institution he entered in 1802, at the age of thirteen.

His course there was cut short a year before graduation, through inattention to his studies and participation in what is euphoniously described by all his biographers as a "frolic" — whatever that may mean. Professor Lounsbury, who writes the life of Cooper for the "American Men of Letters" series, says that Cooper was fond in college of taking long tramps in the picturesque country about New Haven; and adds, with a touch of humor, "but the study of scenery, however desirable in itself, cannot easily be included in a college curriculum." It is not likely that the young man left Yale with reluctance.

Next, as preliminary to a naval career, for which his father's public position was an aid in the way of influence, we find the collegian shipping before the mast in 1806; and after a year at sea, he was commissioned midshipman, serving three years. All this experience was of rich value to the future writer of sea romances. But his roving disposition led him to make another change. A furlough of twelve months had been granted him, and before it expired he married in January, 1811, and resigned from the naval service. His wife was Miss De Lancey of an excellent Huguenot family which had settled at Mamaroneck, New York, where the young people were united. Thence he returned to Otsego County to settle down near the residence of his family to the life of a country gentleman, although for many years he vacillated between Cooperstown and Westchester, the home of his wife's family, with occasional residences, also, in other towns of the vicinity. Proud, irascible, high-spirited, and at times dictatorial, Cooper had the virtues which go with that temperament: he was honest, generous, and affectionate; there is no question that his private home life was happy, and the influence of his wife strong upon him

for good throughout his career, from the time he left the navy in order that he might be with her steadily.

It is remarkable that the prospective writer, for a number of years now, and indeed until he had reached the age of thirty, gave his full attention to building, planting, draining, and stock raising, with no thought of turning to literature.

The story of his taking up the pen is interesting. He was reading an English novel of society to his wife, one day, and, not liking it, remarked to her that he could do better himself. She challenged him to prove his word. He wrote "Precaution," which appeared in 1820 in New York City, so badly printed that what merit it had was obscured. It was a failure, and gave no hint of Cooper's real powers; but the next year, when he was urged by his friends to try an American theme, he produced the Revolutionary story "The Spy," with little hope that it would be well received, and consequently with a rather languid interest in its fate. But within a few months its success was assured, and Cooper was fairly launched as a fictionist. Now he did the wisest possible thing; he bethought him of investing the Otsego Lake region he knew so well with a romantic charm by weaving it into a tale of adventure. He wrote "The Pioneers," in which Leatherstocking, the famous Natty Bumppo, who was to be the hero of his finest series of books, first appeared; wrote it to please himself, he declared, but also pleasing the public and confirming his reputation. And that same year he also produced the stirring sea tale "The Pilot," in which again he drew upon his own experiences of the life described. Hereafter followed in rapid succession, and with a marvelous fecundity of invention and quick production, the long series of fiction which has given Cooper's name more than national fame.

He was an improviser, like Scott or Dumas, pouring out from a full mind and memory a wealth of incident, scene, and character; revising little, hasty, careless, but possessed of a genuine vitality, a natural story-teller in a day uncritical of technique but as well aware when it got hold of a good story as is our own. The historical novel Scott had already made popular; there was no rivalry in America in the making of Cooper's particular kind of fiction. The public was eager for what Cooper had to give, and he gave it many years, prodigally, out of a horn of plenty. During one decade, that from 1840 to 1850, he produced seventeen novels. By the time "The Last of the Mohicans" was printed, in 1826, Cooper had fully revealed his quality; for in this novel Leatherstocking is seen in mid-manhood, whereas in "The Pioneers" he is an old man—hardly more than a preliminary sketch. In this later story he rises into epic dignity, while in the remaining volumes of the world-famous series he is further developed in the different stages of his career, until he stands forth a full-length portrait for the admiration of a world of readers. The typical Indians, too, Uncas and Chingachgook, come into prominence and are so limned that Cooper's conception of their race is attractively presented to his audience.

Without attempting here to follow one by one the many books written by this hale, up-country gentleman for some thirty years, the remaining events of his life may be briefly noted. In 1822, after the success of his first book, Cooper felt the necessity of removing his residence to New York City. If he was to continue author, a city residence was desirable, in view of the slowness of mail carriage, transportation, and the like. Hence he lived in New York for some years. That this city became in the early half of the nine-

teenth century a literary center is due more than anything else to two great men of letters, Irving and Cooper. Others, contemporary and later, like Paulding, Willis, Halleck, and Drake were satellites to these suns ; Bryant's work, although part of it was done as a contemporary of the two elder men, was projected so far forward in time that he is naturally to be viewed with the later New England group. The Knickerbocker school of American literature made New York famed before Boston acquired its literary supremacy a generation afterward.

Cooper lived in the metropolis until 1826, when he went abroad with his family (the *ménage*, including servants, numbered ten persons) as our consul at Lyons (1826 to 1829), his foreign residence taking up a period of over seven years ; he did not return to this country until 1833. After his term as consul had expired he spent the time in traveling, mostly in France and Italy. He had already made large sums by his writings, and besides, Cooper's personal property placed him in easy circumstances. While he sought no social distinction when abroad, he could not hide his light under a bushel, and once discovered, had his full share of lionizing. He liked Italy best of all (as did Hawthorne afterward), and with his usual outspokenness and lack of tact, drew many comparisons between the British (as well as the Americans) and the Italian and French, to the former's disadvantage. Henry Clay, then Secretary of State, had given him this official post at Cooper's request ; it involved few duties, and no salary was attached. Cooper desired it that he might not, on leaving his native land for so long a period, seem to be unpatriotic. And let it be said here, and with emphasis, that Cooper all his life, and in all his utterances, was a sturdy patriot, although he was often misunderstood in his remarks about his country, as was Lowell after him.

The reference to Cooper's left-handed compliments on his countrymen leads to a word concerning the least pleasant aspect of his character. He was perpetually in hot water because of irascible temper, unnecessary frankness, a touchy insistence on his rights, a failure to see that to do a right thing in a wrong way sometimes plays more havoc than the reverse. At his country places he quarreled with his neighbors over boundary lines ; his libel cases with newspapers (which, by the bye, he was in the habit of winning), from the Otsego *Republican* up to the New York *Tribune*, were frequent and notorious ; and his attacks upon the United States for its various sins of omission and commission inevitably aroused much hostility. Cooper while abroad only attacked false Americans who were apologetic of their native land (early examples of Anglo or other phobia) ; the warm-hearted patriotism under his words was evident enough. But no sooner had he returned, than he began to stir up trouble by rushing into print at the slightest provocation, to answer charges and criticisms real and imagined. He was at this time greatly respected and admired for what he had done for American literature, and, indeed, personally ; but he deliberately clouded this sentiment by his course of action. The foolishness of this is apparent but, as Professor Lounsbury puts it, "The one thing Cooper could not do was to remain quiet." He had not grasped the fundamental truth that it is always a mistake to answer a newspaper. The year after his arrival he published the "Letter to His Countrymen" which added vastly to his unpopularity by its injudiciousness in scoring newspapers, political parties, and sundry persons who had criticised his work. In short, no man in the history of American literature, whose character was really so fine and high, did so many ill-advised things. For the

remainder of his days he was at loggerheads with the nation, in matters social, political, and literary. Poor fiction, like the satiric story "The Monikins" (to name but one), was written, and also a vast deal of controversial matter which was simply labor thrown away, or worse. It is sad to see so great a writer, so good a man, thus dissipating his energy and injuring his name.

Cooper resided, during these final, stormy years of his strenuous life, alternately in New York City and Cooperstown. He had always been of a vigorous habit of body, but in the autumn of 1851 dropsy developed, and he died peacefully at Cooperstown, almost exactly sixty-two years of age; in the spring he had become a communicant of the Episcopalian Church, and was confirmed only a couple of months before his death by Bishop De Lancey, his brother-in-law. His property was found to be impaired, but upon its settlement a competence remained to the family. His wife, however, passed away only four months after him; in death they were not long divided. It is pleasant to reflect that whatever the stress and struggle of his public career, his home ties and relations were almost ideal. The Cooper estate at Cooperstown is no longer intact; the house was burned many years ago, and the land has been parceled out and sold for various purposes.

The romance upon American soil begins with James Fenimore Cooper. He looked across the water and saw that Scott, then in the midst of the Waverley novels, was achieving success with the historical romance; and he conceived the possibility of applying the same method to local conditions. Full praise should be granted him for this feat. Beginning to write comparatively late in life, he produced upwards of thirty novels, and his work has all the

faults as well as merits of the rapid and hasty writer. Cooper's literary habits (like those of Scott) were in contrast with the present method of careful technique ; the latter-day writer carefully constructs his work, broods over first drafts, rewrites, polishes, and makes perfect. But spontaneity, gusto, a vital effect of movement and color, Cooper certainly possesses. His reputation now rests most firmly upon his sea tales — he wrote a dozen nautical stories — and, above all, upon the quintette of Leatherstocking tales : "Deerslayer," "The Last of the Mohicans," "Pathfinder," "The Pioneers," and "The Prairie," — mentioning these books in the order, not of their appearance, but to indicate the chronologic treatment of the life of Leatherstocking himself.

Thinking of Cooper's whole work in fiction, we may subtract from what is of real interest to-day a number of pieces of fiction in which his social or political views were allowed to injure the pure story interest, to dull the creative quality of his work. We mean such stories as "Homeward Bound" and "Home as Found," to mention but two. His historical novels, while as a group they are inferior to the Leatherstocking series, contain such sterling things as "The Spy," in which Harvey Birch, the peddler patriot of the Revolution, is one of his best-remembered figures. These stories range in theme from the time of Columbus to that of Colonial days, or of the Revolution. The sea stories, besides "The Pilot," in which Long Tom Coffin, the Nantucket whaler, has remained one of Cooper's favorite creations, and "Red Rover," certainly a vivid tale of the sea, include in "The Water Witch" and "Wing and Wing" at least two more of excellent quality. Of Cooper's nautical tales in general it may be said that they are spiritedly realistic,

bearing the marks of first-hand observation on every page. "The Pilot" awoke the enthusiasm of a seasoned mariner when Cooper read some of it to him, and it is conceded to be superior, in its liveliness and truth, to Scott's "The Pirate," in friendly emulation of which it was written ; in this case Cooper knew his subject better than could Scott. Yet, although it will not do to refer to Cooper as the creator of Leatherstocking and nothing else, it may be said that to have added one such permanent type to fiction is a sufficient achievement for any artist.

No shift of literary fashion or stricter demands of art will prevent Cooper's Leatherstocking tales and sea tales from being read and liked. Many of his stories will always attract their audience. But certain defects all of Cooper's fiction possesses. The carelessness of his method is betrayed in many inaccuracies, in his lack of what to-day we call realism. He makes his characters do impossible things, and say what they never would or could say, in view of what they are : Leatherstocking performs miracles of marksmanship that no sportsman can accept ; he speaks on one page in the uncouth dialect of the trapper, on another in the best literary English. Again, the author's women are as a rule little more than figureheads, lacking variety and reality. His treatment of love is conventional, and to us now often seems mawkish and sentimental ; it lacks fervor and red blood. Cooper was far more successful in the portrayal of men. For another and graver charge, in the portraiture of the Indian as a type, this novelist has aroused a controversy which is likely always to exist. That Cooper idealized the Indian as Mrs. Jackson has done later in her "Ramona," there can be little doubt ; he sees him through a romantic mist of poetry. Leatherstocking's friendliness

with such an old brave as Chingachgook is so charmingly fraternal as inevitably to arouse skepticism to-day. But there is certainly some defense of this treatment. That the result is pleasing, can certainly be allowed ; something, too, may be conceded to the romancer whose object is to present, in dealing with nature and with human nature, the more exceptional and heroic. Much of our national experience, too, with the Indian since Cooper's day, has been disillusioning ; this puts us in a more critical attitude toward a representation which, in Cooper's time, might have been acceptable. At all events, it is stimulating to encounter these grave, noble red men, and to be in their company. Who shall say that before the white man's fire-water had begun to do its work the type did not deserve Cooper's praise? Certainly it offered a picturesque theme, and one that the novelist used with great effect.

In construction, too, in the building and climax of his stories, Cooper's haste and lack of revision are often to be detected. He makes an impression of not giving to his fiction such proportionate shaping as best to serve the interests of his plot. His stories often seem to end abruptly, or with things more or less at loose ends ; sometimes, strictly speaking, they hardly seem to end at all. Apparently he did not see his way through these narratives when he began them. The same criticism applies to much of the work of Scott, whose so-called "huddled endings" have often been pointed out. Once more, the style in which Cooper wrote his books, although it has marked merits of picturesqueness and power, is, to our ears to-day, at times pompous, heavy, even wooden. Of course he began to write at a time when English expression was somewhat more formal than it now is ; and of his manner of handling

the mother tongue in general it is accurate to say that, while he was not a master of style, he was a very vigorous, fluent, and, on occasion, admirable writer, prevailing so in description, and sometimes in dialogue.

But it were to convey a false idea of Cooper not to hasten to add that these faults were, after all, swallowed up in his very great virtues. No writer can hold readers nearly a century unless he has shining excellences, and Cooper has them, and in plenty. He can, for one thing, create characters that live; hardly a figure in the whole range of American fiction is better known, more clearly seen, than Leatherstocking; and other dear and familiar personalities have been named. To create folk who thus abide in the affectionate memory of after times is one of the great triumphs of the novelist, perhaps the greatest. Cooper showed himself a large and noble man in conceiving such a type as Leatherstocking, with his reality yet poetry, his love of outdoor life, of nature, his simple reverence and faith, his shrewdness, generosity, strength, and sweetness. His life, in the successive books, in a shifting environment which takes him through what was then the far West, carried on from early manhood to his impressive death, is the unique story of a striking phase of our civilization now forever gone; the passing of the pioneer. It has an epic quality.

Cooper had invention also; his books are crowded full of incident, action; there is a fine breath of adventure blowing through it all. He loved "the bright eyes of danger," as did Robert Louis Stevenson in a later generation. That is the reason he is loved of boys; older folk appreciate his character-drawing or his descriptions, the young overlook them or skip them, but hang on his hairbreadth escapes, his doings

by flood and field. One might imagine that, because Cooper moves so slow (at least to modern taste), stopping not seldom for grandiloquent scene painting or for the moral comment, young people would have none of him; but they can and do jump these waits and come to action again; there is always a promise of something doing just ahead. Hence he is popular with them. For the more mature reader, however, his descriptions are often among the best things he does, and here is to be found one of his chief merits; he appreciates and makes us appreciate the native scenery as he saw it in the New York wilderness. The example of his work which follows this paper will illustrate the point.

The final point I would make with regard to the positive and even splendid services of Cooper in our fiction is that his work was so truly American at a time when, to make it so, seemed well-nigh impossible. Nobody would have believed that a man could have found worthy themes for romance in the unsettled wilds surrounding his home; yet, with the true instinct of the literary creator, who draws strength from Mother Earth, Cooper turned his back upon British motives and methods (after writing the dull, unsuccessful "Precaution") and, so to say, struck off for himself into virgin forests, across unforded rivers, over trailless plains. And he also seized upon romantic figures and scenes in our history wherever found; as where he made Paul Jones the hero of "The Pilot," and thus early gave a clue which writers on all sides at present are still acting upon in producing native novels of the Colonial, Revolutionary, and Civil War periods. There is little danger of overestimating the merit of such a bold taking of the initiative.

As Irving found a theme in Manhattan and the Hudson

River locality, so Cooper found it at Otsego Lake and thereabouts; both are pioneers of American fiction in a deeper, better sense because they did so, and Cooper's contribution in sweep, mass, and persistence, although not in pure art, was of the two more impressive. The very prolificness of his power has in it something admirable; he wrote on the average more than a novel a year for many years, besides turning out an immense mass of other writings—historical, polemic, religious, and political; and this from a man who did not begin to be an author until well past his youth, and whose natural gifts and training seem to declare him to be more fitted for some practical employment or leadership. The salient qualities of his literary work come from this very fact of his unliterary beginning and the fact that he approached letters unconventionally through an unbeaten path.

This author, then, while he has lost something with the critical sifting out of the years, still occupies, and will always occupy, a worthy place in our literary annals. He is a great pioneer of American literature, and unquestionably the founder of the long native romance—as is Irving of the short tale or Poe of the psychologic tale of horror and mystery. Surely this is no mean service, and with all his faults of art or flaws of character there is that which is so wholesome in the one and so lovable in the other that the critic must always linger in kindness and genuine liking upon the name of James Fenimore Cooper.

RUNNING THE GANTLET

(FROM "THE LAST OF THE MOHICANS")

There yet lingered sufficient light in the heavens to exhibit those bright openings among the tree-tops, where different paths

left the clearings to enter the depths of the wilderness. Beneath one of them a line of warriors issued from the woods, and advanced slowly toward the dwellings. One in front bore a short pole, on which, as it afterward appeared, were suspended several human scalps. The startling sounds that Duncan had heard were what the whites have, not inappropriately, called the "death halloo"; and each repetition of the cry was intended to announce to the tribe the fate of an enemy. Thus far the knowledge of Heyward assisted him in the explanation; and, as he now knew that the interruption was caused by the unlooked-for return of a successful war party, every disagreeable sensation was quieted in inward congratulations for the opportune relief and insignificance it conferred on himself.

When at the distance of a few hundred feet from the lodges, the newly arrived warriors halted. The plaintive and terrible cry, which was intended to represent equally the wailings of the dead and the triumph of the victors, had entirely ceased. One of their number now called aloud in words that were far from appalling, though not more intelligible to those for whose ears they were intended than their expressive yells. It would be difficult to convey a suitable idea of the savage ecstasy with which the news thus imparted was received. The whole encampment, in a moment, became a scene of the most violent bustle and commotion. The warriors drew their knives, and, flourishing them, they arranged themselves in two lines, forming a lane that extended from the war party to the lodges. The squaws seized clubs, axes, or whatever weapon of offense first offered itself to their hands, and rushed eagerly to act their part in the cruel game that was at hand. Even the children would not be excluded; but boys, little able to wield the instruments, tore the tomahawks from the belts of their fathers and stole into the ranks, apt imitators of the savage traits exhibited by their parents.

Large piles of brush lay scattered about the clearing, and a wary and aged squaw was occupied in firing as many as might serve to light the coming exhibition. As the flame arose, its power exceeded that of the parting day, and assisted to render objects at the same time more distinct and more hideous. The

whole scene formed a striking picture, whose frame was composed of the dark and tall border of pines. The warriors just arrived were the most distant figures. A little in advance stood two men, who were apparently selected from the rest as the principal actors in what was to follow. The light was not strong enough to render their features distinct, though it was quite evident that they were governed by very different emotions. While one stood erect and firm, prepared to meet his fate like a hero, the other bowed his head as if palsied by terror or stricken with shame. The high-spirited Duncan felt a powerful impulse of admiration and pity toward the former, though no opportunity could offer to exhibit his generous emotions. He watched his slightest movement, however, with eager eyes, and as he traced the fine outline of his admirably proportioned and active frame he endeavored to persuade himself that if the powers of man, seconded by such noble resolution, could bear one harmless through so severe a trial, the youthful captive before him might hope for success in the hazardous race he was about to run. Insensibly the young man drew nigher to the swarthy lines of the Hurons, and scarcely breathed, so intense became his interest in the spectacle. Just then the signal yell was given, and the momentary quiet which had preceded it was broken by a burst of cries that far exceeded any before heard. The most abject of the two victims continued motionless, but the other bounded from the place at the cry with the activity and swiftness of a deer. Instead of rushing through the hostile lines, as had been expected, he just entered the dangerous defile, and before time was given for a single blow, turned short, and, leaping the heads of a row of children, he gained at once the exterior and safer side of the formidable array. The artifice was answered by a hundred voices raised in imprecations, and the whole of the excited multitude broke from their order and spread themselves about the place in wild confusion.

A dozen blazing piles now shed their lurid brightness on the place, which resembled some unhallowed and supernatural arena, in which malicious demons had assembled to act their bloody and lawless rites. The forms in the background looked like

unearthly beings, gliding before the eye, and cleaving the air with frantic and unmeaning gestures ; while the savage passions of such as passed the flames, were rendered fearfully distinct by the gleams that shot athwart their inflamed visages.

It will easily be understood that, amid such a concourse of vindictive enemies, no breathing time was allowed the fugitive. There was a single moment when it seemed as if he would have reached the forest, but the whole body of his captors threw themselves before him and drove him back into the center of his relentless persecutors. Turning like a headed deer, he shot, with the swiftness of an arrow, through a pillar of forked flame, and passing the whole multitude harmless, he appeared on the opposite side of the clearing. Here, too, he was met and turned by a few of the older and more subtle of the Hurons. Once more he tried the throng, as if seeking safety in its blindness, and then several moments succeeded, during which Duncan believed the active and courageous young stranger was lost.

Nothing could be distinguished but a dark mass of human forms tossed and involved in inexplicable confusion. Arms, gleaming knives, and formidable clubs appeared above them, but the blows were evidently given at random. The awful effect was heightened by the piercing shrieks of the women and the fierce yells of the warriors. Now and then Duncan caught a glimpse of a light form cleaving the air in some desperate bound, and he rather hoped than believed that the captive yet retained the command of his astonishing powers of activity. Suddenly the multitude rolled backward, and approached the spot where he himself stood. The heavy body in the rear pressed upon the women and children in front, and bore them to the earth. The stranger reappeared in the confusion. Human power could not, however, much longer endure so severe a trial. Of this the captive seemed conscious. Profiting by the momentary opening, he darted from among the warriors, and made a desperate and, what seemed to Duncan, a final effort to gain the wood. As if aware that no danger was to be apprehended from the young soldier, the fugitive nearly brushed his person in his flight. A tall and powerful Huron, who had husbanded his forces, pressed

close upon his heels, and with an uplifted arm menaced a fatal blow. Duncan thrust forth a foot, and the shock precipitated the eager savage headlong, many feet in advance of his intended victim. Thought itself is not quicker than was the motion with which the latter profited by the advantage; he turned, gleamed like a meteor again before the eyes of Duncan, and at the next moment, when the latter recovered his recollection, and gazed round in quest of the captive, he saw him quietly leaning against a small painted post, which stood before the door of the principal lodge.

Apprehensive that the part he had taken in the escape might prove fatal to himself, Duncan left the place without delay. He followed the crowd, which drew nigh the lodges, gloomy and sulen, like any other multitude that had been disappointed in an execution. Curiosity, or perhaps a better feeling, induced him to approach the stranger. He found him, standing with one arm cast about the protecting post, and breathing thick and hard, after his exertions, but disdaining to permit a single sign of suffering to escape. His person was now protected by immemorial and sacred usage, until the tribe in council had deliberated and determined on his fate. It was not difficult, however, to foretell the result, if any presage could be drawn from the feelings of those who crowded the place.

There was no term of abuse known to the Huron vocabulary that the disappointed women did not lavishly expend on the successful stranger. They flouted at his efforts, and told him, with bitter scoffs, that his feet were better than his hands, and that he merited wings, while he knew not the use of an arrow or a knife. To all this the captive made no reply; but was content to preserve an attitude in which dignity was singularly blended with disdain. Exasperated as much by his composure as by his good fortune, their words became unintelligible, and were succeeded by shrill, piercing yells. Just then the crafty squaw, who had taken the necessary precaution to fire the piles, made her way through the throng, and cleared a place for herself in front of the captive. The squalid and withered person of this hag might well have obtained for her the character of possessing more

than human cunning. Throwing back her light vestment, she stretched forth her long skinny arm, in derision, and using the language of the Lenape, as more intelligible to the subject of her gibes, she commenced, aloud : —

“Look you, Delaware!” she said, snapping her fingers in his face; “your nation is a race of women, and the hoe is better fitted to your hands than the gun. Your squaws are the mothers of deer; but if a bear, or a wild cat, or a serpent, were born among you, ye would flee. The Huron girls shall make you petticoats, and we will find you a husband.”

A burst of savage laughter succeeded this attack, during which the soft and musical merriment of the younger females strangely chimed with the cracked voice of their older and more malignant companion. But the stranger was superior to all their efforts. His head was immovable; nor did he betray the slightest consciousness that any were present, except when his haughty eye rolled toward the dusky forms of the warriors, who stalked in the background, silent and sullen observers of the scene.

Infuriated at the self-command of the captive, the woman placed her arms akimbo; and throwing herself into a posture of defiance, she broke out anew, in a torrent of words, that no art of ours could commit successfully to paper. Her breath was, however, expended in vain; for, although distinguished in her nation as a proficient in the art of abuse, she was permitted to work herself into such a fury as actually to foam at the mouth, without causing a muscle to vibrate in the motionless figure of the stranger. The effect of his indifference began to extend itself to the other spectators; and a youngster who was just quitting the condition of a boy, to enter the state of manhood, attempted to assist the termagant, by flourishing his tomahawk before their victim, and adding his empty boasts to the taunts of the woman. Then, indeed, the captive turned his face toward the light, and looked down on the stripling with an expression that was superior to contempt. At the next moment he resumed his quiet and reclining attitude against the post. But the change of posture had permitted Duncan to exchange glances with the firm and piercing eyes of Uncas.

Breathless with amazement, and heavily oppressed with the critical situation of his friend, Heyward recoiled before the look, trembling lest its meaning might, in some unknown manner, hasten the prisoner's fate. There was not, however, any instant cause for such an apprehension. Just then a warrior forced his way into the exasperated crowd. Motioning the women and children aside with a stern gesture, he took Uncas by the arm, and led him toward the door of the council lodge. Thither all the chiefs, and most of the distinguished warriors, followed; among whom the anxious Heyward found means to enter without attracting any dangerous attention to himself.

A few minutes were consumed in disposing of those present in a manner suitable to their rank and influence in the tribe. An order very similar to that adopted in the preceding interview was observed; the aged and superior chiefs occupying the area of the spacious apartment, within the powerful light of a glaring torch, while their juniors and inferiors were arranged in the background, presenting a dark outline of swarthy and marked visages. In the very center of the lodge, immediately under an opening that admitted the twinkling light of one or two stars, stood Uncas—calm, elevated, and collected. His high and haughty carriage was not lost on his captors, who often bent their looks on his person, with eyes which, while they lost none of their inflexibility of purpose, plainly betrayed their admiration of the stranger's daring.

The case was different with the individual whom Duncan had observed to stand forth with his friend, previously to the desperate trial of speed; and who, instead of joining in the chase, had remained, through its turbulent uproar, like a cringing statue, expressive of shame and disgrace. Though not a hand had been extended to meet him, nor yet an eye had condescended to watch his movements, he had also entered the lodge, as though impelled by a fate to whose decrees he submitted, seemingly, without a struggle. Heyward profited by the first opportunity to gaze in his face, secretly apprehensive he might find the features of another acquaintance; but they proved to be those of a stranger, and, what was still more inexplicable, of one

who bore all the distinctive marks of a Huron warrior. Instead of mingling with his tribe, however, he sat apart, a solitary being in a multitude, his form shrinking into a crouching and abject attitude, as if anxious to fill as little space as possible. When each individual had taken his proper station, and silence reigned in the place, the gray-haired chief already introduced to the reader spoke aloud, in the language of the Lenni-Lenape:—

“Delaware,” he said, “though one of a nation of women, you have proved yourself a man. I would give you food; but he who eats with a Huron should become his friend. Rest in peace till the morning sun, when our last words shall be spoken.”

“Seven nights, and as many days, have I fasted on the trail of the Hurons,” Uncas coldly replied; “the children of the Lenape know how to travel the path of the just without lingering to eat.”

“Two of my young men are in pursuit of your companion,” resumed the other, without appearing to regard the boast of his captive; “when they get back, then will our wise men say to you, ‘Live or die.’”

“Has a Huron no ears?” scornfully exclaimed Uncas; “twice, since he has been your prisoner, has the Delaware heard a gun that he knows. Your young men will never come back.”

A short and sullen pause succeeded this bold assertion. Duncan, who understood the Mohican to allude to the fatal rifle of the scout, bent forward in earnest observation of the effect it might produce on the conquerors; but the chief was content with simply retorting:—

“If the Lenape are so skillful, why is one of their bravest warriors here?”

“He followed in the steps of a flying coward, and fell into a snare. The cunning beaver may be caught.”

As Uncas thus replied, he pointed with his finger toward the solitary Huron, but without deigning to bestow any other notice on so unworthy an object. The words of the answer and the air of the speaker produced a strong sensation among his

auditors. Every eye rolled sullenly toward the individual indicated by the simple gesture, and a low, threatening murmur passed through the crowd. The ominous sounds reached the outer door and, the women and children pressing into the throng, no gap had been left between shoulder and shoulder, that was not now filled with the dark lineaments of some eager and curious human countenance.

In the meantime, the more aged chiefs, in the center, communed with each other in short and broken sentences. Not a word was uttered that did not convey the meaning of the speaker, in the simplest and most energetic form. Again a long and deeply solemn pause took place. It was known, by all present, to be the grave precursor of a weighty and important judgment. They who composed the outer circle of faces were on tiptoe to gaze; and even the culprit for an instant forgot his shame in a deeper emotion, and exposed his abject features in order to cast an anxious and troubled glance at the dark assemblage of chiefs. The silence was finally broken by the aged warrior so often named. He rose from the earth, and moving past the immovable form of Uncas, placed himself in a dignified attitude before the offender. At that moment, the withered squaw already mentioned moved into the circle, in a slow, sidelong sort of a dance, holding the torch, and muttering the indistinct words of what might have been a species of incantation. Though her presence was altogether an intrusion, it was unheeded. Approaching Uncas, she held the blazing brand in such a manner as to cast its red glare on his person, and to expose the slightest emotion of his countenance. The Mohican maintained his firm and haughty attitude; and his eye, so far from deigning to meet her inquisitive look, dwelt steadily on the distance, as though it penetrated the obstacles which impeded the view, and looked into futurity. Satisfied with her examination, she left him, with a slight expression of pleasure, and proceeded to practice the same trying experiment on her delinquent countryman.

The young Huron was in his war paint and very little of a finely molded form was concealed by his attire. The light ren-

dered every limb and joint discernible, and Duncan turned away in horror when he saw they were writhing in irrepressible agony. The woman was commencing a low and plaintive howl at the sad and shameful spectacle, when the chief put forth his hand and gently pushed her aside.

"Reed-that-bends," he said, addressing the young culprit by name, and in his proper language, "though the Great Spirit has made you pleasant to the eyes, it would have been better that you had not been born. Your tongue is loud in the village, but in battle it is still. None of my young men strike the tomahawk deeper into the war post — none of them so lightly on the Yengeese. The enemy know the shape of your back, but they have never seen the color of your eyes. Three times have they called on you to come, and as often did you forget to answer. Your name will never be mentioned again in your tribe — it is already forgotten."

As the chief slowly uttered these words, pausing impressively between each sentence, the culprit raised his face, in deference to the other's rank and years. Shame, horror, and pride struggled in his lineaments. His eye, which was contracted with inward anguish, gleamed on the presence of those whose breath was his fame; and the latter emotion for an instant predominated. He rose to his feet and, baring his bosom, looked steadily on the keen, glittering knife that was already upheld by his inexorable judge. As the weapon passed slowly into his heart he even smiled, as if in joy at having found death less dreadful than he had anticipated, and fell heavily on his face, at the feet of the rigid and unyielding form of Uncas.

The squaw gave a loud and plaintive yell, dashed the torch to the earth, and buried everything in darkness. The whole shuddering group of spectators glided from the lodge, like troubled spirits; and Duncan thought that he and the yet throbbing body of the victim of an Indian judgment had now become its only tenants.

CHAPTER IV

POE

TWO or three Americans only have won secure international recognition in letters. One of them is certainly Edgar Allan Poe. His natural equipment or endowment and the wonderful perfection of his art have carried his song over seas, and made him widely admired, imitated, and translated as hardly another of the native writers. This is both interesting and curious, because Poe violates one of the two tests set up at the beginning, by which we estimate American literature: namely, he is not representatively American at all. So far from his work standing for a definite section of the country, as does Emerson's for New England, or Lanier's for the South, or Bret Harte's for the West, Poe's verse or prose might have been written anywhere within or without our borders. It has no local color, and it does not reflect our native ideas or ideals; it tells little or nothing of the soil whence it springs, of the civilization behind it.

We call Poe a Southern poet, but more because he lived a part of his life in Virginia than because he in any way reflects the South. In fact, Poe's life was very much that of a nomad, he did not stay long enough in any one place to partake of it in any deep sense. The permanency of his fame and the rare accomplishment of his genius, therefore,

furnish a remarkable illustration of the truth of art in its perfection; an inimitable gift for language and melody and imaginative conception will in themselves, even if separated from certain higher qualities which we like to associate with the world's masterpieces, reward their possessors with the choicest literary laurels. And this becomes all the more noteworthy when it is remembered that the man in question died when but a trifle over forty years of age.

Poe's life history is a sad and somber one, and as striking, perhaps, as any in the annals of our literature. He was born in Boston in 1809, his parents actor folk, the mother English, the father American. But as he was adopted by a gentleman of Richmond, Virginia, Mr. Allan, when he was but two years old, his earliest years were spent in the South. Five years of school life, from his sixth to his eleventh year (a period of vast importance in the upbringing of any impressionable child of genius), were passed in an English school near London; possibly some of Poe's mystic and strange landscapes were influenced by these surroundings, for he is the most unlocal of writers. From his eleventh to his sixteenth year he fitted for college in Richmond; going thence to the University of Virginia in February of 1826, only to withdraw under a cloud in December of the same year. There seems to have been much that was unfortunate in the early home life of Poe. His patron petted him, but with a good deal of temper along with his indulgence, he fostered traits in Poe's willful and imperious nature, which, under a better guidance, might have been checked, and perhaps eradicated. At the time he was ready for college he was ripe to show, when he had left the home, the results of the lack of wise parental restraint. He had gambling debts at college, and various rumors, more or less well founded, of

extravagance and dissipation have sifted down to us. It is only fair to Poe to say that the tendency in modern scholarship is to exonerate him from many of the charges of his first biographer, Griswold, and thus to set him in a better light. In the study of Poe's life by Professor George E. Woodberry, and the later account by Professor Harrison, the tangled record is straightened out in many ways, and justice attempted at least, this being especially true in the case of Professor Harrison, whose kindly estimate is the result of using new material, and may be sought as a needed correction to Griswold's malice.

It should be added that whatever Poe's wildness in college and after life, he was an athlete in his student days, a fine swimmer and runner, and he secured honors in French and Latin; in other words, he exhibited himself as a young man of parts and of a healthy outdoor activity, — something not to be expected of the dreamy degenerate which Poe has been taken for by some. The fact is, that until the last few years there was a picturesque tradition which demanded that Poe be regarded as a somber son of genius, wrecked by his own double nature, a sort of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. More careful examination, inspired by the modern scientific spirit, which demands truth at all hazards with regard to the life of those who have done great things, has placed this writer in a somewhat different light. An erratic life Poe indubitably led; the unfortunate habit of overindulgence of drink he did possess. But all this has been treated too often in a melodramatic way. Poe had a temperament to which one glass of wine was intoxication; his was the high-strung, nervous physique, which ill bears any unnatural stimulant. And at least it may be said that he paid the full penalty for his misdoings, — there are few men indeed who do not pay

less for more sinning. There is plenty of testament to show that Poe in maturity for long periods was a perfectly well-trained, quiet, dignified gentleman of elegant carriage and address. Mr. Parke Godwin, one of the very few survivors at the present writing of the generation which had direct relations with Poe, has testified emphatically to the happy impression made upon him by Poe. The vagaries of his life touching women, and vagaries they were, have been handled in the same strictly romantic manner, in the spirit of the Della Cruscans.

These general reflections may be well borne in mind while we consider Poe at college. Professor Kent, of the University of Virginia, in connection with the recent Poe memorial meeting at which the Zolnay bust of the poet was unveiled at that institution, published a sketch in which the truth about Poe's college career is fairly set forth, in the light of the records. To this book the earnest student is commended. It is sufficient here to say, that on the whole, the college days of Edgar A. Poe had their share of harum-scarum, but were very much what might be expected of a young Virginia lad of that day with a rich guardian. Plenty of college boys there were then, and are now, who, after similar doings in their salad days, make reputable and valuable citizens. It must be reiterated, too, that while Poe was taken out of college before his first year was completed, because of his habits, he was not expelled; his guardian withdrew him, and while this may have been justified by the facts, it is well understood now that Mr. Allan was a martinet of discipline, erring in extreme measures. This method of handling a high-spirited, proud, sensitive fellow, with a touch of morbidity and a natural wildness in his blood, derived perhaps from his actor forebears, was just the one to produce the worst results.

At any rate, Poe, resenting the treatment, wandered to Boston, published his "Tamerlane" there, a volume precious in its first edition to all book-lovers, and learned, as every young poet must, that literature won't bring a living. He enlisted in the army, and after two years there he was admitted to West Point, being assisted by Mr. Allan, who, by this time, had relented in his attitude toward the boy. He remained at that institution less than a year, — and so, by 1831, when he was twenty-two, we find him in Baltimore, trying to make a living by contributions to magazines. Looking back upon the five years between 1826–1831, one feels that they must have been full of strange experiences for so young a man ; we know but little of them, for Poe in respect to the details of his external life was most reticent, — this in spite of a strange, even intense egoism as to his essential life, the life of the mind and soul. A feeling of sadness is begotten, a sense of the pathos of it all, as one thinks of this proud, perturbed young man roaming from place to place, from occupation to occupation, in the vain endeavor to find work and an abiding city. All his life Poe was a wanderer, and a fitting epitaph upon his tomb one feels would be that in "Hamlet": "Rest, perturbed spirit."

"Tamerlane," that slim volume of 1827 (when he was eighteen), contains some of his notable work, but it will be best to pass on to his Baltimore period, and think of the volume of 1831, called simply "Poems," for that book is substantially Poe's testament, his typical contribution to American literature. In the case of no poet, by the way, is it more necessary to read his work in the light of his personality and life. One thing the student will be likely to notice perhaps with surprise: the smallness of Poe's poetical contributions. As a matter of fact, one small

volume of only about fifty poems contains his whole output in verse : more than that, the pieces upon which his claim to greatness is securely founded number less than twenty, — one of the most remarkable examples in all literary history of the value of quality, and reminding us that a bad epic is worth very much less than a perfect sonnet.

The youthful poems of Poe found in the "Tamerlane" volume show a clever versifier, influenced plainly by the English masters ; but they are fairly to be described as good rather than great, the improvisation or practice work of a man of promise ere he has come into his own of power. They lack the peculiar witchery of Poe, and, indeed, upon the evidence they offer, the Poe who was to be can hardly be discovered. There is some significance that in "Tamerlane," the title poem of the collection, Poe found a theme sympathetic to his imperious pride and spirit of revolt : the Eastern monarch in his haughty spirit of superiority (the reader should, in this connection, read Elizabethan Marlowe's fine double play of "Tamerlane") seemed a figure to attract young Poe from the very nature of the subject ; the poem, therefore, is more autobiographic than of direct poetic value. The next poem in the book, — another Eastern motive, — "Al Aaraaf," is also of interest to the student, showing Poe's tendency to seize on a theme that has in it an ethereal and remote poetical significance — that of a great star which appears in the heavens, dazzles by its brilliancy, and then disappears forever. A certain starry aspiration thus runs through all the poet's work.

But it was with the "Poems" of 1831 that the real Poe was announced : herein, in such pieces as "To Helen," "The Raven," "Lenore," "Israfel," "The City in the Sea," and "The Haunted Palace," to mention only a half-dozen,

all of them now of household fame, the distinctive traits of one of the most original of the sons of song were made manifest. It will be well, therefore, at this point to say a word on the essential greatness of Poe's verse.

Its limitations are strictly defined. It is fairly astonishing, indeed, within what narrow limits this writer's power cuts its way into the human heart; it is like a Western cañon that rises sheer in odd beauty all its own, yet the stream that rushes madly through its deep gorge is so narrow that it would seem as if it might be compassed by an athlete's leap. Yet the cañon is one of the great effects of nature, and Poe's poetry is one of the great effects of modern literature. So far as it may be analyzed, it consists of a blend of three magics: the magic of word, of music, and of a strange eery imagination. It lacks the higher ethereal quality of a Wordsworth, a Tennyson, or a Browning; it wants red blood, and the appeal to the more apparent interests and passions; it is not poetry to whose measure men may march toward the City of Perfection. In this sense it is hardly great poetry: Poe cannot be ranked among the literary masters of world-wide importance, because he fails both on the intellectual and spiritual sides of literature. This applies not only to his verse, which we are now considering, but to his prose, which will be considered afterward. But the verse of Poe haunts, charms, bewitches, hence it cannot die. His subjects are really but variations of two themes: his own misfortunes and a vague lyric love for woman, personified in "Lenore," or another: woman as a kind of symbol for a mystic, shadowy love that is more dream than flesh. Poe is thus unearthly, unfleshly, — all is moonlight and mist and musical vapping with him, but what wonders of sound and suggestion he performs with these ingredients!

As a type of his somber spirit of revolt, the sadness over the irrevocable losses of life, the world-famous "Raven" comes first to mind; a poem spouted in the schoolroom, inevitable to all English Readers, and so familiar to many who have not read poetry in general, or Poe in the full range of his work. Modern criticism sometimes likes to point to this poem as little other than a clever trick, and the poet himself has coldly analyzed it, declaring that the whole thing was mechanically built up around the melodious refrain "Never More." But, legerdemain or no, it certainly is in its way a masterpiece of music and suggestion, a matchless expression of a certain mood of world weariness and satiety. It won a prize of one hundred dollars offered by a magazine called the *Mirror* in 1845, when he was thirty-six years old, and by this success, Poe, just beginning his career as a contributor of literary material to the periodicals, was much encouraged to go on. Since "The Raven" is the best known of Poe's poems, and although effective and indeed wonderful in its well-nigh mesmeric charm, it by no means stands for the height of his genius, we will not quote it here, but will illustrate his power by several shorter lyrics. That entitled "To Helen" is a perfect example of him.

TO HELEN

Helen, thy beauty is to me
Like those Nicæan barks of yore,
That gently, o'er a perfumed sea,
The weary, wayworn wanderer bore
To his own native shore.

On desperate seas long wont to roam,
Thy hyacinth hair, thy classic face,

Literary Leaders of America

Thy Naiad airs, have brought me home
To the glory that was Greece
And the grandeur that was Rome.

Lo ! in yon brilliant window-niche
How statue-like I see thee stand,
The agate light within thy hand !
Ah, Psyche, from the regions which
Are Holy Land !

The classic atmosphere is perfectly caught here, the simple stanzaic form faultlessly handled, and the phrasing has an elegance and finish beyond praise. The touch at the end is typical, with its hint of the mystical, lifting the old-time light o' love by implication into something higher, akin to the eternal feminine. Poe's lines are often in their matchless beauty such that they enter into the common body of choice quotations from the poets ; in the second stanza, the two closing lines are of this sort. The everlasting motive of fair woman, which has fed poetry more than any other one theme, simply because it is the central expression of man's emotional nature, is voiced with great warmth and a more personal note of sorrow as well as with a greater allurements of metrical device in "To One in Paradise," a lover's sad plaint of his lost love. The magic of Poe's metrical handling is especially illustrated in the closing stanza, which is by far the loveliest of the four ; one never gets it out of the ear and soul when once it enters.

TO ONE IN PARADISE

Thou wast that all to me, love,
For which my soul did pine, —
A green isle in the sea, love,
A fountain and a shrine,

All wreathed with fairy fruits and flowers,
And all the flowers were mine.

Ah, dream too bright to last !
Ah, starry Hope ! that didst arise
But to be overcast !
A voice from out the future cries,
"On ! on !" But o'er the Past
(Dim gulf !) my spirit hovering lies
Mute, motionless, aghast !
For, alas ! alas ! with me
The light of Life is o'er !

"No more — no more — no more —"
(Such language holds the solemn sea
To the sands upon the shore)
Shall bloom the thunder-blasted tree,
Or the stricken eagle soar !

And all my days are trances,
And all my nightly dreams
Are where thy dark eye glances,
And where thy footstep gleams, —
In what ethereal dances,
By what eternal streams.

Mention of these pieces in which woman is hymned naturally leads to some reference to Poe's relations with the sex, a puzzling and complex aspect of his stormy life. Here again, common sense, and a desire not to extend facts to fit a theory, may help us. After four years of literary life in Baltimore (1831-1835) Poe had gone to Richmond to become editor of the *Southern Literary Messenger*. And just before going, he had (it is believed secretly) married his cousin, Virginia Clemm, a mere child of thirteen ; at all events, the ceremony was publicly performed the next year. Poe's

struggle against poverty for literary recognition — and dire enough it was — had been lightened by his living with Mrs. Clemm, his aunt, and the consequent winning of her daughter. At this time he was dependent upon chance contributions to the magazines, and when he won, in 1833, by a story entitled "The Manuscript Found in a Bottle," a one hundred dollar prize offered by a Baltimore paper, it came like a benison from heaven. It must be understood that he steadily wrote fiction along with verse, although we consider the former after finishing with the poetry. But such windfalls were few and far between, and he barely lived by hack work during this period.

Obviously the marriage was a foolish one, judged by prudential considerations; but it is long since either bards or tailors have been altogether sensible in giving hostages to fortune, and Poe's followers in this way are many. His child wife was beautiful, and that Poe loved her and idealized her, that she furnished much of the inspiration of his best song, it is entirely reasonable to believe. That he was a most impressionable man, his various affairs with women after his wife's death go to show; in fact, with his ardent temperament, his tendency to emotional excesses of all kinds, his imperious temper and aristocratic beauty, one can understand that he must have been a fascinating lover, if an uncertain husband. To question his affection for his young wife is to take the extreme of cynicism toward Poe in his ill-starred fate. The gloomy romanticism of his career receives part of its attraction from this relation to the frail girl who for twelve years shared his lot, and died while still but newly come to woman's estate, after bitter, yet perhaps bitter-sweet, years of companionship with an erring son of genius. That the loss is expressed in the poem last quoted,

and in the following "Annabel Lee," one of his most familiar and well-loved things and richly deserving its reputation, who can doubt? A touch of pathos is added by the fact that this poem was not published until a little after his own death.

ANNABEL LEE

It was many and many a year ago,
In a kingdom by the sea,
That a maiden there lived whom you may know,
By the name of Annabel Lee ;
And this maiden she lived with no other thought
Than to love and be loved by me.

I was a child and *she* was a child,
In this kingdom by the sea :
But we loved with a love that was more than love, —
I and my Annabel Lee ;
With a love that the winged seraphs of heaven
Coveted her and me.

And this was the reason that, long ago,
In this kingdom by the sea,
A wind blew out of a cloud, chilling
My beautiful Annabel Lee ;
So that her highborn kinsman came
And bore her away from me,
To shut her up in a sepulcher
In this kingdom by the sea.

The angels, not half so happy in heaven,
Went envying her and me, —
Yes! — that was the reason (as all men know,
In this kingdom by the sea)
That the wind came out of the cloud by night,
Chilling and killing my Annabel Lee.

But our love it was stronger by far than the love
Of those who were older than we, —
Of many far wiser than we ;
And neither the angels in heaven above,
Nor the demons down under the sea,
Can ever dissever my soul from the soul
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee :
For the moon never beams, without bringing me dreams
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee ;
And the stars never rise, but I feel the bright eyes
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee ;
And so, all the night-tide, I lie down by the side
Of my darling — my darling — my life and my bride,
In the sepulchre there by the sea,
In her tomb by the sounding sea.

In another poem, seemingly inspired by love, "For Annie," a remarkable, though unequal performance, certain lines and rhymes of which are as well known as anything Poe did, the poet, while brooding on loss and death, gives the reverse of the picture. Here, not the mistress but her lover is dead, and is imagined as happily embowered, even in his grave, by the luxuriant tresses of his sweetheart.

FOR ANNIE

Thank Heaven! the crisis —
The danger — is past,
And the lingering illness
Is over at last, —
And the fever called "Living"
Is conquered at last.
Sadly, I know,
I am shorn of my strength
And no muscle I move
As I lie at full length ;

But no matter! — I feel
I am better at length.

And I rest so composedly
Now, in my bed,
That any beholder
Might fancy me dead,—
Might start at beholding me,
Thinking me dead.

The moaning and groaning —
The sighing and sobbing —
Are quieted now,
With that horrible throbbing
At heart : — ah, that horrible,
Horrible throbbing !

The sickness — the nausea —
The pitiless pain —
Have ceased, with the fever
That maddened my brain,—
With the fever called "Living"
That burned in my brain.

And oh! of all tortures,
That torture the worst
Has abated — the terrible
Torture of thirst
For the naphthaline river
Of Passion accurst : —
I have drank of a water
That quenches all thirst : —

Of a water that flows,
With a lullaby sound,
From a spring but a very few
Feet underground, —
From a cavern not very far
Down underground.

And ah! let it never
Be foolishly said
That my room it is gloomy,
And narrow my bed ;
For man never slept
In a different bed, —
And, to *sleep*, you must slumber
In just such a bed.

My tantalized spirit
Here blandly reposes,
Forgetting, or never
Regretting its roses, —
Its old agitations
Of myrtles and roses.

For now, while so quietly
Lying, it fancies
A holier odor
About it, of pansies, —
A rosemary odor
Commingled with pansies, —
With rue and the beautiful
Puritan pansies.

And so it lies happily,
Bathing in many
A dream of the truth
And the beauty of Annie, —
Drowned in a bath
Of the tresses of Annie.

She tenderly kissed me,
She fondly caressed,
And then I fell gently
To sleep on her breast, —
Deeply to sleep
From the heaven of her breast.

When the light was extinguished
She covered me warm,
And she prayed to the angels
To keep me from harm, —
To the queen of the angels
To shield me from harm.

And I lie so composedly,
Now, in my bed,
(Knowing her love)
That you fancy me dead, —
And I rest so contentedly,
Now in my bed,
(With her love at my breast)
That you fancy me dead, —
That you shudder to look at me,
Thinking me dead.

But my heart it is brighter
Than all of the many
Stars in the sky,
For it sparkles with Annie,
It glows with the light
Of the love of my Annie, —
With the thought of the light
Of the eyes of my Annie.

This ghoulisn preference for charnel house themes is characteristic of the poet; the poem is curiously commingled of almost unpoetical realism in verse and the magic that is his. This composition, too, is an excellent example of his mastery of the refrain or repetend, the repetition of verse and lines with slight alteration for the effect of lingering music: a device developed by Poe and hall-marked by his genius so that it has always been one of his technical feats and graces. His handling of the

refrain in "The Raven," and in that other linguistic marvel, "The Bells," is familiar, and has never been equaled by any poet using the English tongue.

There is that in the man's genius which leads him at times toward a sort of dim symbolism, fluent, but of unclear meaning, a sort of "revel of rhyme," with sound substituted for sense. This is well illustrated by that other baffling poem to which a woman's name is given, "Ulalume." If one utterly ignorant of our tongue were to read this piece of verse, a certain pleasure in it would be likely to follow; it is so wonderfully smooth flowing and swift flowing. The cryptic meaning, the suggestion of gloom, mystery, and horror running through it, together with a hint of the autobiographic, all merge to make an unforgettable impression. Like Swinburne, Poe was in danger of this extreme; it seems as if his one peerless gift for word and sound carried him off his feet at times. But let the piece speak for itself.

ULALUME

The skies they were ashen and sober;
The leaves they were crisped and sere —
The leaves they were withering and sere;
It was night in the lonesome October
Of my most immemorial year;
It was hard by the dim lake of Auber,
In the misty mid region of Weir —
It was down by the dank tarn of Auber,
In the ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir.

Here once, through an alley Titanic,
Of cypress, I roamed with my Soul —
Of cypress, with Psyche, my Soul.

These were days when my heart was volcanic
As the scoriac rivers that roll—
As the lavas that restlessly roll
Their sulphurous currents down Yaanek
In the ultimate climes of the pole—
That groan as they roll down Mount Yaanek
In the realms of the boreal pole.

Our talk had been serious and sober,
But our thoughts they were palsied and sere—
Our memories were treacherous and sere—
For we knew not the month was October,
And we marked not the night of the year—
(Ah, night of all nights in the year !)
We noted not the dim lake of Auber—
(Though once we had journeyed down here) —
Remembered not the dank tarn of Auber,
Nor the ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir.

And now, as the night was senescent,
And star dials pointed to morn—
As the star dials hinted of morn—
At the end of our path a liquescent
And nebulous luster was born,
Out of which a miraculous crescent
Arose with a duplicate horn—
Astarte's bediamonded crescent
Distinct with its duplicate horn.

And I said — “ She is warmer than Dian :
She rolls through an ether of sighs —
She revels in a region of sighs :
She has seen that the tears are not dry on
These cheeks, where the worm never dies,
And has come past the stars of the Lion,
To point us the path to the skies —
To the Lethean peace of the skies —

Come up, in despite of the Lion,
To shine on us with her bright eyes —
Come up through the lair of the Lion,
With love in her luminous eyes."

But Psyche, uplifting her finger,
Said — "Sadly this star I mistrust —
Her pallor I strangely mistrust : —
Oh, hasten! — oh, let us not linger!
Oh, fly! — let us fly! — for we must."
In terror she spoke, letting sink her
Wings until they trailed in the dust —
In agony sobbed, letting sink her
Plumes till they trailed in the dust —
Till they sorrowfully trailed in the dust.

I replied — "This is nothing but dreaming :
Let us on by this tremulous light!
Let us bathe in this crystalline light!
Its Sibyllic splendor is beaming
With Hope and in Beauty to-night : —
See! — it flickers up the sky through the night!
Ah, we safely may trust to its gleaming,
And be sure it will lead us aright,
We safely may trust to a gleaming
That cannot but guide us aright,
Since it flickers up to Heaven through the night."

Thus I pacified Psyche and kissed her,
And tempted her out of her gloom —
And conquered her scruples and gloom ;
And we passed to the end of the vista,
But were stopped by the door of a tomb —
By the door of a legended tomb ;
And I said — "What is written, sweet sister,
On the door of this legended tomb?"
She replied — "Ulalume — Ulalume —
'Tis the vault of thy lost Ulalume!"

Then my heart it grew ashen and sober
As the leaves that were crisped and sere —
As the leaves that were withering and sere —
And I cried — “It was surely October
On *this* very night of last year
That I journeyed — I journeyed down here —
That I brought a dread burden down here —
On this night of all nights in the year,
Ah, what demon has tempted me here?
Well I know, now, this dim lake of Auber —
This misty mid region of Weir —
Well I know, now, this dank tarn of Auber,
This ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir.”

There is a little group of poems, broader both in suggestion and movement, which exhibit Poe in a most striking manifestation of his unique power. They are prevailingly somber, vague, unhuman productions, so to say, but compelling in their lure and loveliness. Such a one is “The City in the Sea.” The metrical movement is admirable, and few greater poems of mood and picture can be named in all literature. If the Philistines should turn upon us with a very natural question, “But what does it all mean?” we perhaps hesitate; it is best taken as a dream vision. It is full of color and music and that penumbra of suggestion that is in all good poetry, and in the use of which Poe is richly endowed. It is unnecessary to look for self-consciousness or definite allegory; it is rather poetry for poetry’s sake, and should be enjoyed as such.

THE CITY IN THE SEA

Lo! Death has reared himself a throne
In a strange city lying alone
Far down within the dim West,

Where the good and the bad and the worst and the best
 Have gone to their eternal rest.
 There shrines and palaces and towers
 (Time-eaten towers that tremble not!)
 Resemble nothing that is ours.
 Around, by lifting winds forgot,
 Resignedly beneath the sky
 The melancholy waters lie.

* * * * *

But lo! a stir is in the air!
 The wave — there is a movement there!
 As if the towers had thrust aside,
 In slightly sinking, the dull tide, —
 As if their tops had feebly given
 A void within the filmy Heaven.
 The waves have now a redder glow,
 The hours are breathing faint and low;
 And when, amid no earthly moans,
 Down, down that town shall settle hence,
 Hell, rising from a thousand thrones,
 Shall do it reverence.

Another such poem is "The Haunted Palace," which is clothed upon with all the master's magic of word music and word picture.

THE HAUNTED PALACE

In the greenest of our valleys
 By good angels tenanted,
 Once a fair and stately palace —
 Radiant palace — reared its head
 In the monarch Thought's dominion —
 It stood there!
 Never seraph spread a pinion
 Over fabric half so fair!

Banners yellow, glorious, golden,
On its roof did float and flow,
(This — all this — was in the olden
Time long ago,) —
And every gentle air that dallied,
In that sweet day,
Along the ramparts plumed and pallid,
A winged odor went away.

Wanderers in that happy valley,
Through two luminous windows, saw
Spirits moving musically,
To a lute's well-tuned law,
Round about a throne where, sitting
(Porphyrogene !)
In state his glory well befitting,
The ruler of the realm was seen.

And all with pearl and ruby glowing
Was the fair palace door,
Through which came flowing, flowing, flowing,
And sparkling ever more,
A troop of Echoes, whose sweet duty
Was but to sing,
In voices of surpassing beauty,
The wit and wisdom of their king.

But evil things, in robes of sorrow,
Assailed the monarch's high estate.
(Ah, let us mourn! — for never morrow
Shall dawn upon him desolate!)

And round about his home the glory
That blushed and bloomed,
Is but a dim-remembered story
Of the old time entombed.

And travelers, now, within that valley,
Through the red-litten windows see
Vast forms, that move fantastically
To a discordant melody,

While, like a ghastly rapid river,
Through the pale door
A hideous throng rush out forever
And laugh, — but smile no more.

Here the allegory is too steadily apparent: the writer seems to refer to his own life, gifted with intellect and soul and fallen, through whatever cause, on evil days of revolt, despair, and doom. It is most impressive, and attracts with a sort of shuddering fascination.

We cannot do better than to leave Poe's poetry with the starry lyric "Israfel"; one of the highest flights of his genius, and like the one just given, thinly veiling autobiographic confession. To Poe, poetry, as he himself said, was a passion rather than a principle; the conception of the heavenly bard whose impassioned themes suggested the place and opportunity; the thought of this Israfel mentioned in the Koran as having heartstrings for a lute, appealed with the sure appeal of a kindred soul. In singing of him he sang of himself.

ISRAFEL¹

In Heaven a spirit doth dwell,
"Whose heartstrings are a lute."
None sing so wildly well
As the angel, Israfel,
And the giddy stars (so legends tell)
Ceasing their hymns, attend the spell
Of his voice, all mute.

Tottering above,
In her highest noon,
The enamored moon
Blushes with love, —

¹ And the angel Israfel, whose heartstrings are a lute, and who has the sweetest voice of all God's creatures. — KORAN.

While, to listen, the red levin
(With the rapid Pleiades, even,
Which were seven,)
Pauses in Heaven.

And they say (the starry choir
And the other listening things)
That Israfeli's fire
Is owing to that lyre
By which he sits and sings, —
The trembling living wire
Of those unusual strings.

But the skies that angel trod,
Where deep thoughts are a duty —
Where Love's a grown-up God, —
Where the Houri glances are
Imbued with all the beauty
Which we worship in a star.

Therefore, thou art not wrong,
Israfeli, who despisest
An unimpassioned song :
To thee the laurels belong,
Best bard, because the wisest!
Merrily live, and long!

The ecstasies above
With thy burning measures suit
Thy grief, thy joy, thy hate, thy love,
With the fervor of thy lute :
Well may the stars be mute!

Yes, Heaven is thine ; but this
Is a world of sweets and sour :
Our flowers are merely — flowers,
And the shadow of thy perfect bliss
Is the sunshine of ours.

If I could dwell
Where Israfel
Hath dwelt, and he where I,
He might not sing so wildly well
A mortal melody, —
While a bolder note than this might swell
From my lyre within the sky.

Such is a characteristic picture of Edgar Allan Poe. A sympathetic knowledge of these quoted pieces, a re-reading of the choicest here mentioned, will let the reader, as nothing else will, into the heart of the mystery, the abiding-place of the charm. A thorough familiarity with the eight or ten pieces quoted will effect this better than a dutiful perusal of the rest of his work. Eventually, and for that very reason, the lovers of Poe, having felt the delight of these masterpieces, will read his verse in its entirety as a labor of love.

Now there are only a very few poets in the whole range of English-speaking literature possessing the metrical mastery, the felicity of verse, the subtle something besides, which gives verse distinction and grace, denoting that of Poe. For this reason, and in spite of his not always admirable tendency to bemoan his fate in terms of art and aspire to the starry way through human griefs and graves, does he occupy his strangely definite position in American literature as a poet, one of the few genuine creators. But the most astonishing part of it is, let us repeat, that he accomplished this without bringing a high and helpful message to mankind, and as a poet of but one theme, and that a narrow and largely morbid one. The fact emphasizes the might of art, the dominance of one supreme gift, the gift of song. The lovers of American poetry can always point with pride to Poe as a master who had conquered by patient labor along

with natural endowment, the graces of the poetic art, until his technique became so perfect that time could not destroy his work.

But it must not be overlooked that Poe did work in fiction hardly less remarkable than that which he accomplished in verse. We have already noted how, in the Baltimore days of obscurity, he wrote prose fiction in short story form. These stories he continued to produce throughout his career of magazine writer, editor, and general literary hack worker. As poetry waned in him, prose grew, and to it, after he was thirty years of age, he gave most of his time and strength, prose critical and artistic. This turning from verse to prose, from the life of the emotions to that which embodied some of the reasoning processes, is, of course, the common experience of literary persons.

All this fiction, in its final shape, appears in two volumes. It was originally published as "Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque" in 1840 and as "Tales" in 1845. In the division of fiction, one has to include all short stories, concerning which we have already said something. In this Poe was well-nigh as supreme as he is in the minor key of lyric verse. He is a master in the command of atmosphere, color, sound, and suggestion woven into and about a motive of mystery, horror, and subtle spiritual and supernatural significance. His work of this kind ranges from the detective story, — of which the "Murders in the Rue Morgue" is a type, — a little classic which furnished Conan Doyle at a later date the stimulus for his "Sherlock Holmes," through gradations many of horror and adventure stories to such fine fantasies as the "Fall of the House of Usher" or "Ligeia," where all is innuendo and nuance, weird picture and mournful yet passionate wail of music. For illustra-

tions of these various sorts, one may read "The Gold Bug," "The Black Cat," "The Telltale Heart," and "William Wilson." There is nothing like this fiction in English literature. Some of the tales show a curious compound of grave scientific deduction, of lofty flights, of a somber imagination. This led one of his editors, Mr. Woodberry, to name a whole division of his work "Tales of Ratiocination" and still another "Tales of Pseudo Science." In this gravely realistic handling of imaginative material, Poe introduces a method in fiction which has become common enough with us now, and which makes his work, although it is a half-century or more old, seem strangely modern. Perhaps no one has so wonderfully well blended realism and romance in this way. The author possessed a smattering of knowledge, scientific, physical, and ethical, which he displays with the greatest skill and plausibility, and, indeed, Poe's mind was curiously analytic, and potentially at least, his powers of reasoning were great. This he brings to bear in his fiction in a way that is most effective. He is a pioneer in using for literary purposes the then new marvels of scientific discovery, — physics, thought transference, electricity, and the like. The verisimilitude of fact is perfectly conveyed at the same time that the wildest imaginations are being indulged in with a somberness that almost cheats us into believing.

The form of his work demands a word. He wrote the tale, not essaying larger fiction, save in the case of "Arthur Gordon Pym," which, however fine in conception and beyond criticism in execution, is, on the whole, less successful. The short story, from a dozen to fifty pages in length, was the mold into which his genius naturally ran for self-expression, and he is a veritable pioneer, and in some wise the creator of the modern short story. It would not be true

to say that Poe founded the short story, for Washington Irving, as we have seen, and Dickens, wrote them before him ; but Poe set his seal upon certain categories of the tale, and he has never been surpassed, indeed, has never been equaled, within his particular preserves. His position therefore in the history of the general evolution of the fiction of our tongue is an important one.

To read his stories is to have an increased sense of the gloom as well as the grandeur of this man's gift. There is something aloof, unhuman, uncanny in it all. It stimulates the brain and makes the heart beat faster with wonder and fear and awe ; but it does not expand the nature, or warm the cockles of the heart with that cheery sense of man's brotherhood. For all these things in literature, we must go elsewhere. Poe's genius in prose, even more than in poetry, is of the moonlight and of the midnight, but very rare and perfect, for the light of the moon has an ethereal significance, and the night is the imagination's chosen stalking ground.

We must now trace the remaining years of Poe's too brief, tragically incomplete, erring life. The story expressed in a sentence, is the record of changing employment and residence ; he did well for a while, and then, through weakness, and because of unfortunate traits of character which made it difficult for others to get on with him, trouble and failure would come, and the family would begin again elsewhere. Already in Baltimore, the drink habit and the drug habit had lifted their skeleton heads ; then, as throughout his days, be it remembered, perhaps less to be called habits than irregularities, whose results would, in his case, be ten times more disastrous than happens with the steady alcoholic indulgence of the average club man about town.

Poe's editorial experience was varied, and he had brilliant

qualifications for such a function. Again and again he took hold of a new or defunct publication and brought it into good estate. But alas ! he lacked perseverance, he lacked equanimity, that nomadic restlessness that seemed to be in his very being drew him on. He was moody, irritable, suspicious ; perhaps his statements were sometimes untrustworthy, though God alone can pronounce upon the physical condition which made them possible. Misunderstandings and quarrels with friends were not uncommon. One is saddened and perplexed in trying to get a clear notion of such a gifted, complex, contradictory human creature as Edgar Allan Poe. No easy-going theory which complacently divides human beings into two parts, the sheep and the goats, will help in this case. Human nature is an intricate thing, and Poe was one of those men whose bosom was a microcosm of all the light and shadow of the universe. Two beings dwelt in his handsome body. For his good side he had many winning and lovable qualities, — quiet, dignified, with a manner of remarkable gentleness, with his pale, fine face and the wide brow over which waved the dark hair, with splendid eyes, and possessed of a voice of charming timbre, his social graces were very unusual, and those who encountered him when these attractions were allowed their natural display, were greatly drawn to him, and have left tributes which seem quite at variance with the darker testimonies, which, however, are readily understood when one understands his complexity. There was a touch of Southern chivalry in his address to women, and the fact that he was a poet lent its glamour.

One can well believe that there were many days in that little Fordham cottage near New York City (which can be now visited by the public, it having been made a memorial to the poet) when the young wife, Virginia, felt the charm of

his presence, the privilege of his comradeship. That there is a reverse to the medal, is one of the tragedies of literary history and human experience.

When Poe went to Richmond as the editor of the *Southern Literary Messenger*, his prospects were good. His pay was increased soon after he began, but he was steady in his work only a short time, and the irregularity of his character estranged his friend the editor and led to his dismissal. All his subsequent experiences were of this character ; new positions, bright prospects, dashed hopes, melancholy endings. One's thoughts turn again and again with a genuine heartache to the lovely little girl wife who watched this erratic orbit, and was aware of the light that burned within. After Richmond, he went to New York, taking up literary work there in 1837-1838. Then he moved to Philadelphia, where he made his headquarters for six years ; living in the suburbs in a little cottage about which roses climbed. During these years in Philadelphia he held editorial positions with *Burton's Magazine* and *Graham's Magazine*, in the case of the last named taking full charge and bringing it into prominence as a literary periodical through his wise directorship ; but here, as always, was the fatal lapse.

The final five years of Poe's life of buffetings and brief calms were spent in New York, where he had connections with the *Evening Journal* and the *Broadway Journal*, of the second of which he became owner and editor, and it was at this period that he occupied the Fordham cottage a few miles from the city ; an utterly simple, one-storied little structure, where, in 1847, Virginia died of consumption. It is a terrible picture, that of the death of the child wife when the Poes were so poor that the poet drew his own coat over the emaciated body in order to keep off the cold,

against 'which he was unable to provide the necessary coverings. The haunting, melodious sadness of "Annabel Lee" may well be autobiographic in voicing the sorrow which rolled in upon his soul at this time. An attack of brain fever followed upon Virginia's death, and his friends had to make up a purse to take him through this strait. On his recovery, he resumed his literary work, but was perceptibly aged and spent; his black moods carrying him at times close to the verge of insanity. Terribly lonesome as he was, we find him less than a year later offering himself to a dear friend and fellow verse writer, Mrs. Sarah Whitman of Providence, who, after much dubiety, gave him a half promise based upon his good conduct, only a month later to withdraw her pledge because of a spree in which he indulged.

Poe at this time was no doubt under great stress, and moody to the extreme. He was lonely, depressed, at times desperate. That he turned for companionship to congenial women is not surprising. In July, 1849, he went to Richmond with the idea of starting a magazine in that city. Poe had believed for years in the possibility of using a literary organ in the South that would bring that section of the country into literary connection with the North. He visited friends during the summer in the South, and in spite of several moral backslidings in the way of drink, entered into relations with Mrs. Sarah Skelton, a well-to-do widow, and an early flame of his youth, which promised to lead to marriage. When Poe left Richmond in the fall of this year (1849), his prospects — in spite of his health and intemperate habits — were comparatively encouraging, but he was doomed to be his own worst enemy. He never got farther in his northward journey than Baltimore, where he was found helpless and insensible in a saloon, was taken into a city hospital,

and after four days of wretchedness, died, being but little past his fortieth year, in what should have been the very prime of his powers, the best of his literary performance.

His tomb is visited to-day by thousands in a little graveyard connected with an old church in that city. The record of such a brief, tragic life is almost too piteous to bear. Literary annals hardly hold a case in which the dramatic contrast of genius and weakness, of high and low, in human achievements, clash with more violent discord.

A final word should be spoken of Poe as a critic of literature, for he left several volumes of criticism. Much of it is journalistic, because of its reference to current writers now forgotten, and it is therefore not of permanent value. But Poe had remarkable analytic gifts, as well as gifts of remarkable expression. He was not less analytic than imaginatively sympathetic, one is tempted to say, in his creative work both in fiction and poetry. There seems a double nature in the man, intellectually as well as morally. Hence certain of his papers entitled "The Rationale of Verse" and "The Poetic Principle," are most interesting and suggestive,—especially in that they are the productions of a great poet speaking of the art he represents. His theories are still much discussed. Certain of his statements, like the famous dictum that there is no such thing as a long poem, because the poetic ecstasy is in its very constitution of short duration, and hence, ideally at least, should be completed at one sitting, in one mood, has provoked a great deal of argument. Poe had a high ideal of his craft, and a profound respect for its technic. His teaching, which separated the beauty which he claimed to be the abiding aim of all poetry from any and all didactic purposes, which so often were associated with

it, was more needed and wholesome in his own day than our own, because then the elder writers were prone to preach, whereas at present, estheticism and art for art's sake make up the most popular creed, and there is very little danger of careless technic. Yet Poe indubitably enunciated a sound and lasting principle of art in declaring the arousement and exercise of the feeling for beauty to be the end of art,—the idea so nobly expressed by Keats, in his

Beauty is truth, truth beauty, this is all
Ye know and all ye need to know.

Like the great English critic, Hazlitt, Poe's literary attainments were curiously commingled of acuteness and broad-minded appreciation, together with spite, envy, and an absurd overestimate of the second rate. He was unfair to Longfellow ; while, on the other hand, he lauded contemporary poetasters whose names have long since been consigned to oblivion. It was only when he got away from personalities that he was sure to be at his finest.

The student, then, who is desirous of getting a rounded view of Edgar Allan Poe must study him first of all as a poet, next as a remarkable writer of short stories, and then, finally, as supplementary, read his best criticism, mainly for the light it throws upon his own creations in song and story.

CHAPTER V

HAWTHORNE

IN thinking of Nathaniel Hawthorne as a man and author, Wordsworth's line on Milton leaps to the mind :—

His soul was like a star, and dwelt apart.

There is something aloof, a touch of the strange, and shy, and mysterious about the solitary genius of the man of Salem. All latter-day attempts to exhibit him in his personality and daily walk as a creature of warmly human relations do not remove the impression gained from his works and consonant with his acts and thoughts and feelings as they are revealed in his biography. Yet his gifts were masculine ; he lacked the erraticism and morbidity of a Poe. But there was a hint of the night in it, the night lit by the pale, mystic radiance of heaven's high-placed stars. The study of his life and writings will serve to make this plainer.

Hawthorne was of excellent New England blood. His ancestry went back to the Major William Hawthorne who was prominent in Colonial days as a legislator and warrior. The romancer refers to him in the Preface to "The Scarlet Letter" as his "grave, bearded, sable-cloaked, and steeple-crowned progenitor, who came so early with his Bible and his sword, and trod the unworn streets with such a stately port, and made so large a figure as a man of war and peace." Both father and grandfather were sea cap-

tains, an interesting fact for its suggestion of their hereditary influence on his work—an influence, however, not easy to discover. Hawthorne in the same Preface says of them: "From father to son for above a hundred years they followed the sea: a gray-bearded shipmaster in each generation retiring from the quarter-deck to the homestead, while a boy of fourteen took the hereditary position before the mast, confronting the salt spray and the gale which had blustered against his sire and grandsire," and he goes on with quiet humor to imagine these his forebears as contemptuous over their descendant who had become a writer of "story books," exclaiming, "Why, the degenerate fellow might as well have been a fiddler!" In much the same spirit, humorously satirical, Robert Louis Stevenson refers to himself more than once as a white-fingered, weak offspring of a hardy race of lighthouse builders and keepers.

His mother's family, the Mannings, was also one which had settled in New England in the seventeenth century, so that the New England consciousness (much more a definite thing then than now) was deep in his nature, and by both he was well fitted to become the revealer of the historic New England conscience, working out in the persons of his spiritual tragedies.

Mrs. Hawthorne, Nathaniel's mother, was a quiet widow, whose husband died four years after the son's birth, and who led, during his boyhood and upbringing, a very secluded life. His schooling, provided for by an uncle, was secured at private schools in Salem, the quaint old Massachusetts seaport which was his native place; and later from a tutor who fitted him for college. When he was nine, the Hawthornes removed to Sebago Lake in Maine, where the mother had inherited an estate, and for some years Nathaniel had

the advantage there of a wholesome country life,—all of which he greatly enjoyed, being a boy of lively nature, much given to athletic exercises, and fond of sport. He returned, however, to Salem to fit for college, and he has left words to show that he regarded the proposed scholastic training as of dubious good. "Four years of my life is a great deal to throw away," he declares, and the remark has its amusement for us who look back upon him as a great man of letters, all his days a dreamer over books.

When the family resumed their Salem life, the recluse habits of the mother were intensified. Hawthorne himself narrates that for years she never came to the family table for her meals, which were served in her room. A single fact like this gives a vivid picture of the excessive exclusion of her manner of existence. It is not hard to fancy that this would react upon the temperament of a sensitive boy with the brooding tendency in his blood. Yet too much of it must not be made : earlier biographers of Hawthorne were so inclined, but the more correct portrait allots to him his full share of playfulness and healthy interests. As his Maine experiences witness, he liked outdoor life, went fishing and shooting, kept animal pets, and—so far from being a forlorn, neglected lad, a kind of David Copperfield—was rather petted by the family relatives. He read some of the standard literature in these early days in a rambling, ruminative way : we learn that "The Pilgrim's Progress" was much in his hands, as were Shakespeare and Milton,—good fodder for the assimilative period. The school terms were varied by vacationings that kept body and brain in wholesome balance. Altogether, we may see Hawthorne's boyhood as a normal and enjoyable one, whatever the idiosyncrasies of his home.

During his course at Bowdoin College, in Maine, which he entered in 1821, being in his eighteenth year, he was of a convivial disposition, playing cards, giving wine parties, and taking a hand at college sports and pranks, though we do not find him either neglecting his studies or becoming embroiled with the authorities, after the manner of so many embryo men of letters in their college days. Physically, by the testimony of his son Julian, he was at this time athletic and handsome. "He was five feet, ten and a half inches in height, broad-shouldered, but of a light, athletic build, not weighing more than one hundred and fifty pounds. His limbs were beautifully formed, and the molding of his neck and throat was as fine as anything in antique sculpture. His hair, which had a long, curving wave in it, approached blackness in color; his head was large and grandly developed; his eyebrows were dark and heavy, with a superb arch and space beneath. His nose was straight but the contour of his chin was Roman. . . . His eyes were large, dark blue, brilliant, and full of varied expression. Bayard Taylor used to say that they were the only eyes he had ever known flash fire. . . . His complexion was delicate and transparent, rather dark than light, with a ruddy tinge in the cheeks . . . up to the time he was forty years old, he could clear a height of five feet at a standing jump. His voice, which was low and deep in ordinary conversation, had astounding volume when he chose to give full vent to it; . . . it was not a bel- low, but had the searching and electrifying quality of the blast of a trumpet."

His college friends included the poet Longfellow, Horatio Bridge, afterwards distinguished in the naval service, and Franklin Pierce, who was to be President of the United States, and whose stanch friendship with Hawthorne lasted

throughout their lives. Bridge, too, was always an intimate, and has left a book about his friend containing valuable side lights upon his character. In another Preface, that to the "Snow Image," which is addressed to Bridge, Hawthorne refers to this life at "a country college, — gathering blueberries in study hours, under those tall academic pines, or watching the great logs as they tumbled along the current of the Androscoggin, or shooting pigeons and gray squirrels in the woods; or bat-fowling in the summer twilight; or catching trout in the shadowy little stream which, I suppose, is still wandering river-ward through the forest — though you and I will never cast a line in it again — two idle lads, in short (as we need not fear to acknowledge now), doing a hundred things that the faculty never heard of, or else it had been the worse for us, — still it was your prognostic of your friend's destiny, that he was to be a writer of fiction." One reads with a half smile, thinking how different would be the confession as to his daily doings of a student in our day.

Hawthorne did not shine brightly in his college work, and seems to have shirked what he did not like: he was graduated decently, but not *cum laude*. In spite of the pleasantly normal manner of his early career, however, a certain effect of aloofness in him is produced by reading all the records. He himself has testified to the recluse manner of his existence on his return to Salem, after leaving Bowdoin, in order to devote his time to writing and not to be heard of by the world for a long term of years, — more than a decade. "For months together," he says, "I scarcely held human intercourse outside my own family, *seldom going out except at twilight*, or only to take the nearest way to the most convenient solitude." I have italicized the sentence

which seems to me to be one of those unconscious flash-lights upon a character, of prime importance in studying this strange man. However social, even convivial, he may have appeared to his college mates, no man whose nature did not possess a quality of remoteness and self-sufficiency could have instinctively followed such a course. To be sure, he has told us that, "living in solitude till the fullness of time had come, I still kept the dew of my youth and the freshness of my heart." Doubtless, this period of lonely incubation was priceless in its results; but the mind reverts to those words: "Seldom going out except at twilight," and again finds there something at once explanatory and curiously suggestive of a nature whose grave retrospective brooding and constant commerce and preoccupation with the great questions of individual conscience are reflected in the external habit of life.

From 1825, when he took his Bowdoin degree, to 1837, the date of the appearance of "Twice-told Tales," Hawthorne remained in the family home in Salem, lost to the public eye, absorbed in his literary experiments, while his fellow-collegian, Longfellow, advanced to position and fame. The young Salem man meditated, wrote, burned what had been written, rewrote his tales, and with a single-eyed devotion to his art, rare and beautiful in these days of hurried execution and haste to get into print (like the modern college boy's haste to get out and into life), served his stern apprenticeship to letters, thus securing a command of his tools which was to reveal him in the first book he allowed to be given to the public, as a trained and accomplished master. It must be borne in mind that he showed this perseverance with practically no encouragement from anyone outside. He wrought to transmute his dreams and

imaginings into the form of fiction, drawing on as slender a capital of experience as ever did one who was to become a great writer. But that lack was more than compensated for by one of the imaginations which can body forth the realities of the inner spirit. In his room, high up in the ancestral home, Hawthorne labored patiently, quietly, while his brothers and sisters, recluses like himself, left him much alone. "Here," as he expresses it, "I sat a long, long time, waiting for the world to know me, and sometimes wondering why it did not know me sooner; or whether it would ever know me at all, at least, till I were in my grave." And he declares that by turns he was glad and sad in his work: "But oftener I was happy," — a statement we are pleased to get, since the picture as a whole is somber enough.

One thing, and perhaps one thing only, was in Hawthorne's favor during those years when he was endeavoring to get a hearing as a writer: the competition was little compared with the present day. Irving's fiction work was long since published and familiar to the world; Poe's wonderful short stories had not been given to the public. There was ample room for a really distinctive, new writer of fiction. To counteract this advantage, the market was of course uncertain, limited; for literary wares but little comparatively was paid. Hawthorne received thirty-five dollars apiece for the magazine use of his early tales which have since become classic. The beginning of his career was undertaken on conditions on the whole chilling and unpromiseful.

Several tentative performances preceded the sure ground on which he walked with the "Twice-told Tales": the novel "Fanshawe," soon withdrawn from circulation after being brought out at his own expense, — a story of college life

decidedly amateurish and having little of the typical Hawthornesque distinction; and a collection known as "Seven Tales of my Native Land," toward which the publishers took the usual skeptical attitude, and whose sheets were finally condemned to the flames as ruthlessly as if they were so many Salem witches and he one of his stern ancestors who regarded them as of the evil one. Some of his tales, afterward to be published in the volume which was to show his true quality, were accepted gladly enough by such magazines as *The Token*, *The New England*, and the *Knickerbocker*; but they drew little attention, did not spread his reputation; the audience waiting on periodical literature at this time was small and scattered. All through this formative time Hawthorne had no position that meant income or regular enforced employment, save that in 1836, the year before the "Twice-told Tales" were published, he became editor of the *American Magazine of Useful and Entertaining Knowledge*, a place of drudgery he endured for but two years. With this exception, Hawthorne to the Philistine eye must have appeared as a young man sitting at home and idling away a precious portion of his life, — the very years which should have been devoted to active effort for what is known as "getting on" in his career. To us, as we look back upon it in the light of what was to follow, it is plain that he could not have put his time to better use.

The "Twice-told Tales" upon their publication made no stir in the literary world; such more often than not is the fate of works destined to take a firm place in literature. Hawthorne did not have the experience of Byron who woke up one morning to find himself famous. Not only was the book not a popular success, but it would be an exaggeration to say that it received general critical recognition. Long-

fellow, to be sure, gave it a cordial reception in a critique in *The North American Review*, glad to commend the work of a college friend in which he saw distinguished worth. But it was only slowly and in a small way that the approval for which every author is anhungered came to Hawthorne at this time. Still, the effect of this publication was an excellent good thing, for it drew enough attention to him to get him somewhat out of his shell; he recalls that he was "compelled to come out of my owl's nest and lionize in a small way." In this wider social contact the noteworthy thing was his meeting with Sophia Peabody, of the noted Massachusetts family which has given numerous important citizens, men and women, to the commonwealth. To this lady he became engaged in 1838—the year after the book was printed—although his circumstances made it unwise to marry until four years later, in 1842.

The influence of this noble woman upon Hawthorne was in all ways such as to make his home life the sweetest, brightest part of his somber career. Many other testimonies to this are left by his son, his son-in-law, and his various biographers. Hawthorne worshiped his wife, and found not only rest and consolation, but strength and inspiration in her society. A man whose nature was not dependent nor widely affectional, he yet leaned upon her. "Thou art the only person in the world," he wrote her, "that ever was necessary to me. I think I was always more at ease alone than in anybody's company until I knew thee." These are words as significant, as revelatory, as those quoted before concerning his recluse habit. In any comprehension of the strange character and unique genius of Nathaniel Hawthorne, the part played by his wife cannot be ignored,—and it is one of the noblest parts enacted by any companion

to a veritable man of letters, a part often no doubt more trying than the world will ever know. It is certain that the happiest side of his lonesome life journey was experienced in his home : and the best side of his nature was exposed to the home circle ; there is testimony and to spare bearing on this conclusion.

The year after his engagement to Miss Peabody, Hawthorne was made weigher and gauger in the Boston Custom House, a post which brought him into relations with Bancroft, the historian, and not, one would surmise, particularly attractive to him or suitable to the powers of a man of such parts. Yet the quiet man of letters made a good executive in this and other subsequent positions of a practical nature. Hawthorne, like Emerson, had a practicality, a shrewdness, which came into play in his contact with the material world. He once said that he liked to get into touch with the real world,—to meet all sorts and conditions of men ; not perhaps so much as their fellow human being as in the rôle of the psychologist seeking to acquire material to use in his romances. This Boston work took him into the city for two years ; it gave him some valuable studies of New England character, as his books show, though nothing more intimate and typical than those furnished by Salem,—for such a romance, for example, as “The House of Seven Gables.” One smiles in reflecting how little at this juncture Nathaniel Hawthorne, a man in the middle thirties, his first book (a representative one, too) published with no *éclat* as he went quietly about a daily practical employment, was recognizable as the greatest American romancer of the nineteenth century, one of the very few men who was to shed unfailing luster upon our native literature.

Before returning to Salem, when he gave up the Boston

office which, however well he performed his duties, was no congenial task, — “a very grievous thralldom,” he characterizes it, — Hawthorne gave an expression of the idealism that was in him by joining the famous Brook Farm community, remaining there for something over a year. This fact calls up visions of Margaret Fuller, Emerson, Curtis, Ripley, and others of a group whose attempt to combine philosophy and practical farming is one of the witnesses to that wonderful strain of transcendentalism in the Yankee make-up which did so much for our earlier letters. Hawthorne tried the experiment but a short time, perhaps because that same practical streak in him was offended by some of the incongruous doings at Brook Farm, so humorously described by Curtis and others; agriculture and asceticism, however acceptable to Margaret Fuller, did not seem to him a natural combination. But there were fruits literary, if not actual, from this Brook Farm sojourn, as we shall see. He returned to Salem in 1842 to marry Miss Peabody and settle in the Old Manse, that historic house of memories which has now a magical sound because of its associations. Here he knew the happiness of a home which at once protected him from the world and kept his lonely genius tempered and genialized by the household hearts that were his own. Here children were given him; and his son Julian and his daughter Rose, Mrs. George Parsons Lathrop, have left us valuable aids to the study of their father. Here he walked the woods and fields or rowed his boat on the beautiful Musketaquid River. Here, in a word, he tasted the best of the human lot; “nobody but we ever knew what it is to be married,” he once wrote his wife; and these little heart glimpses are all the more precious to set over against such descriptions of Hawthorne’s carriage toward others, as that by Curtis,

where he states that "Hawthorne, a statue of Night and Silence, sat a little removed, under a portrait of Dante, gazing imperturbably upon the group."

The year of his marriage appeared the second volume of his "Twice-told Tales." His residence at Concord with the manifesto he had made in the first collection of his stories, brought him the congenial society of that notable coterie of folk whose intellectual interests and literary gifts made them distinctive in our letters ; among them, Thoreau, Emerson, Margaret Fuller, Alcott, and Channing. Even unto this day, to say nothing of its great memories, Concord, with its natural beauty and its democratic ideals, the high-bred simplicity of its social life, is not like unto other towns. It is a natural Mecca for the literary student in this country. There was something peculiarly apt in such an environment for a nature like Hawthorne, with its self-dependence, its liking for privacy, its necessary but willing adoption of a frugal mode of living. His contentment in his home is expressed in letters again and again. He says that he is thankful for the early unhappiness, that his present joy may stand in the higher relief.

But the reception of the second "Twice-told Tales" (a title, by the way, taken from Shakespeare), though critically there was a gain over the first volume, was by no means such as to bring much money to the master of the Manse. Hawthorne, after four years of it, felt the necessity of going back to Salem (which he by no means loved) as surveyor of customs, a position the Democratic administration extended him through his influence with Pierce. For three years (1846-1849) he was thus occupied, and literature suffered accordingly ; the usual political shift threw him out of employment, so that he could return to Concord and to fiction

writing. "The Scarlet Letter" was the golden result of this enforced leisure; if all losses of political position were followed by like results, they could be borne with equanimity. Then, for the first time, the invigorating light of fame shone upon him in the retired Manse; this novel at once gained a wide recognition which was not, like so much of sudden success, to die down as suddenly. That Hawthorne basked and expanded in the hard-won victory may be believed; he was nearer fifty than forty years old when his greatest book brought him sure place and reward; a quarter-century of work and waiting lay behind him. It was a triumph late-given, but a triumph none the less,—all the more, perhaps, for its tardy coming. Family reasons now led him to remove to the little red house at Lenox, Massachusetts, in the beautiful hill country where, under more cheerful circumstances than he ever penned a piece of fiction, he wrote "The House of Seven Gables." Mr. James T. Fields, of the famous Boston house of Ticknor & Fields, was besieging Hawthorne for another book, in view of the great success of "The Scarlet Letter"; it may be going too far to see in the fact that this new novel does not grapple quite so grimly with the great spiritual tragedies, a reflex of the sunnier environment which the romancer was now enjoying. Sure it is that "The House of Seven Gables" has for a color scheme a delicate mystic gray, relieved by rose tints of poetry. It was during the Lenox residence that "The Scarlet Letter" was given to the world, and perhaps its reception also helped his mood. After Lenox, there was a brief sojourn of a year or thereabouts at West Newton, one of the outlying communities within easy reach of Boston, yet offering the attractions of country air and economic living. Here the third of the long romances was written, "The

Blithedale Romance," a story lacking the historic perspective and the atmospheric quality of the two preceding it, yet very powerful in its way, and most interesting for the realism with which Hawthorne used his Brook Farm experiences; for this tale depicts the life there, and against this background a tragic narrative unfolds.

In 1852 Hawthorne and his own came back to Concord, which was to be henceforth his permanent home. He purchased the Wayside, another house in Concord, opposite Emerson's, and therein set up his household gods. But he was not long to remain unmolested, for the next year (1853) he was sent as our consul to Liverpool. Pierce, his college comrade, had become the Democratic President; and the offer of the post followed naturally enough. Hawthorne had already written an autobiography of Pierce for campaign purposes, and the consulship was an expression of gratitude. It was, however, by no means a glittering emolument, and one rather begrudges Hawthorne, in view of his peculiar powers, the four years thus passed in England. His literary productivity amounted to little while he was there; socially he made no stir, as had Irving before, as did Lowell afterward. In truth, Hawthorne seems to have been antipathetic to the British. He did not even meet the literary representative men, his natural peers. This and a later residence in England gave him the material for the book, "Our Old English Home," published in 1863, the year before his death; in which there is not to be found the sympathy and insight one might have expected from a writer so sensitive to the charm of the past of his own New England.

His consular duties were not of the sort congenial to his temperament, and he seems to have been unable to conquer his native disability to free social contact and intercourse;

although along with this trait went, as we have noted, a sort of professional interest in mankind as so much material for a writer. After the four years of the consulate, spent in what he grimly describes as a "blighted chamber," Hawthorne went down into Italy, where he remained between one and two years, basking in the poetry of that "woman land," keenly responsive to its wonderful beauty. "The Italian Notebooks" are eloquent witness to how much inspiration he received from the country which has so often stirred men of the English race to imaginative expression of some kind. It was while here that he gathered material for, and ruminated upon, the fourth and last of his great group of romances, namely, "The Marble Faun."

He returned to England from Italy for a further sojourn of a year or more, and finally, in 1860, came back to his native land, after a seven years' absence. The Civil War had not formally been declared, but the country was already in the throes of the great struggle. Hawthorne's attitude was for a New Englander somewhat unsympathetic; with an intellectual coolness which was characteristic, he saw both sides of the question, and was not a Northern partisan. His warm friendship for Pierce the Democrat was an element in the position he took. He dedicated one of his books to Pierce, and when his friends besought him, in view of the situation, to omit the dedication, since it would certainly injure the success of the book, he refused to do so and, as had been prophesied, the volume met with angry opposition for that reason. Hawthorne at this juncture offers a sharp contrast with such other New England writers as Whittier and Lowell whose early song flamed and thrilled with a fervid patriotism.

It has been said that every American who remains abroad

at least seven years will never reassume his nationality with so much intimacy and relish as before his travels. This is certainly not true of Nathaniel Hawthorne. He loved New England, and on his return to the quaint Wayside at Concord, he gathered his own about him and settled down in great contentment to busy himself with his literary plans, and enjoy the home life which always brought him the greatest happiness. There, health and strength slowly ebbed, and four years later, in 1864, he closed his mortal activity, having lived two months less than sixty years. Athletic as he was by gift of nature, Hawthorne's health began to decline shortly after his coming back to America. When at length work could no longer be done, although arranged for or promised, a summer trip in the White Mountains was devised by the anxious family, and his old-time friend, ex-President Pierce, offered himself as companion. But at Plymouth, New Hampshire, his strength gave out, and he passed away at the inn there in the night. As human lives average, Hawthorne's was a happy, uneventful one. He died in full knowledge that a just renown was his; he had seen the labor of his hands and could be satisfied. He was spared the feebleness and helplessness of extreme old age; he was full of literary plans to the last. At the time of his death he was at work upon "Septimius Felton," and the incomplete manuscript was laid in his coffin. The theme of this romance, published posthumously in 1872, was the possibility of solving the riddle of immortality; one befitting a man who was himself on the very verge of the eternal.

It were idle to deny that the life of Nathaniel Hawthorne does not attract one to him as a man so warmly and genially as one is attracted to personalities like Charles Lamb or Robert Louis Stevenson. But there was much that was ad-

mirable in Hawthorne's character. He was in his work the New England conscience made flesh ; surely an important rôle and mission. And his life when viewed with insight and sympathy will be felt to be in key with his work. It was his business to study the soul of mankind that he might quicken its sense of the tremendous spiritual problems that make life not a pleasure-ground but a battle-ground, upon which character shall be proved and the development of the race settled. If he walked much alone as a man, if he seemed to raise a barrier between himself and others, this can be understood in one who only in lonesomeness of the spirit could see and tell of the tragic verities of the soul.

The genius of Nathaniel Hawthorne expressed itself in two main forms of imaginative writing—in the long romance and the tale or short story. In my treatment of Irving and Poe the point that the short story is a distinct form of fiction has already been made. In general, the great short story writer is not a good novelist, and vice versa. But Hawthorne excelled in both forms. He began with tales, and the romances were of his more mature life and art ; but he never ceased to pour into the short story mold some of his choicest and most striking conceptions. They are to be found in the first and second series of the "Twice-told Tales," in "The Snow Image and Other Tales," in "Mosses from an Old Manse," and in the two collections for children, "A Wonder Book" and "Tanglewood Tales." Perhaps nothing in the tale form is more characteristic than such sketches as "The Snow Image," which is quoted at the end of this article, or "The Great Stone Face," in both of which a moral lesson is conveyed allegorically in a poetic setting of story, told with the quiet perfection of manner and with all the skill in conveying atmosphere for which this

romancer is famed. There are also many stories, of which "Doctor Heidegger's Experiment," "The Great Carbuncle," "Rappaccini's Daughter," and "The Minister's Black Veil" are examples, where some dark secret of the human soul is revealed in a machinery which involves some use or hint of the supernatural, and is only saved from the morbidity displayed by a Poe through the strenuous spiritual implication. Again, there is a group of tales possessing a kind of satiric humor which often contains a touch of the grimly sardonic, to wit: "The Celestial Railroad," "Feathertop," "The Intelligence Office," and many others. In pieces like "A Rill from a Town Pump," the sweeter and more kindly aspect of Hawthorne's humor, interblent with pathos, is manifest, and the reader should understand that while the trend of this man's genius was toward the presentment of the more somber elements of life, with marked emphasis upon the irony of fate which sets a melancholy half smile upon the narrator's face, he wrote not a few sketches wherein all is of a May-day beauty, tempered but not darkened by a subtle poetic haze of sadness. Nevertheless, it is an autumn atmosphere for the most part with Hawthorne. He sees life as a "twilight piece," in Browning's phrase. Yet autumn and the twilight have their loveliness and their wholesome lessons; and this master of romance gives us our fill of both.

In many of the tales, Hawthorne's love for nature is delightfully illustrated by his descriptions of flowers, of wood and field, of mountain, and stream, and blue dome of sky, of the manifold pageantry of the shifting months in New England. The local color is faithfully given because it is part of the writer's vision, nay, of his very soul.

If Hawthorne fails comparatively in any particular of the art of fiction, it is in the handling of the humorous. Sometimes, for the present-day reader at least, in the manner of his wit there is a suggestion of the heavy or forced. His nature was so essentially serious, that one feels him to be a trifle off his own ground. Sometimes, too, be it confessed, his style may strike us as a little formal ; but on the whole it is of a rare perfection, showing exquisite adaptation of means to an end, a quiet loveliness of movement, together with a felicity of phrase and an innate feeling for the dignity, grace, and breeding of English expression, unmatched by any other writer of American fiction. Indeed, one might say that his distinction of style and loftiness of spiritual meaning are the two main strands wherefrom he weaves his magic cloth of imagination.

We may now contrast Hawthorne the writer of tales and Hawthorne the maker of romance. It may be said that in the tales he is more the moralist, at times frankly didactic ; and less the narrator of straight stories regarded as pieces of human experience interesting in themselves. We have seen that of necessity there is less of narrative, of plot, and of character-complexity in the short story than in the long novel, which, with its many characters unfolding and interacting upon each other in many scenes, can much more easily convey a feeling of the largeness of life. In the tale, atmosphere, suggestion, impressionism, are much ; and as Hawthorne possessed them to a remarkable degree, he was able to produce truly wonderful short stories.

But in the romances, which on the whole stand for his greatest achievement, there is besides such an embodiment of spiritual struggle in human action taking place upon this larger human arena, that a far more deeply vital effect is

produced, and the reader forgets the allegory in the tremendous poignancy and pathos of the picture.

By common consent, the first of these romances in time, "The Scarlet Letter," is also the first in power and art. American literature points to it with a just pride as our highest accomplishment in the imaginative depicting of the native life. The nature of the subject helps to explain this preëminence; it is a study of the New England past. In that past Hawthorne was steeped; he knew it, he felt it, as did no one else who has essayed to reproduce it in fiction. He saw its outer physiognomy and its inner soul. The bygone times of his own section and people offered his imagination just the stimulus it needed to play over the subject and give it body and vital air. In all his romance work, there is the subtle idealization of character, scene, and situation which results in the symbolic nature of outward events being brought home vividly to the reader's mind.

Moreover, still explaining why "The Scarlet Letter" is peerless among the Hawthorne romances, he had in the problem dealt with in the book, one that fascinated him, and of tremendous significance to the world—that of sin, expiation, purification of character. Character, Hawthorne teaches, can come forth cleansed as if by fire from the furnace of sin and sorrow, if only the repentance be true and open confession be made; in fact, such sorrowful experience is the condition of character growth. Thus as the Puritan maiden, Hester, develops through sin to a spiritual peace, the thoughtful reader, while enthralled with the book as a soul history, becomes aware of its symbolism. There is a vast surrounding atmosphere of suggestion to the story which adds immeasurably to its greatness. As story, it is eminently simple, yet tremendous in its very simplicity,

because of its moral truth, and told with a marvelous unity of effect, so that all is harmonious and in key. The realism of it all is as noticeable as its idealism; nothing in all the ranges of fiction is more vividly true than the scene where Arthur Dimmesdale declares his sin from the platform. This romance shows that in works of art of the highest kind, truth and beauty merge, there being no real conflict between them. The descriptions in this novel and all that part of it which might be called background are felt to be far more than description and background in the usual sense, being in fact of the very warp and woof of the fabric. Hawthorne in all his work makes his scenery part and parcel of the story; I can think of nobody else in English fiction, save Thomas Hardy, who thus interpenetrates scene and character so that all takes on one tone, nothing can be spared.

The close following romance, "The House of Seven Gables," is hardly less characteristic of Hawthorne, though of far less spiritual bigness and importance. It is interesting and curious to know that he preferred it to "The Scarlet Letter." In this book again the romancer is dealing with things he knew intimately and deeply felt. To express them was germane to his genius. The theme is the tragedy of heredity, the sins of the fathers working out in after times. More specifically, in Judge Pyncheon we have a masterful portrait of pride and its downfall, along with the suggestion of the household where malefic influences abound, and only the sweeter air let in by healthy young love and the banishment of an old taint of evil conduct, can bring in the better kingdom. His wonderful gift for atmosphere is nowhere better displayed than in this story; the old gabled house itself might be called the central figure of the plot. Its doors and windows and gabled ends are like human hands

and eyes telling, with many a wink and nod, the under-meaning of the strange, half mystic tale. The house stands in Salem, and its identity is disputed to-day; but whichever the house pointed out to the visitor, he is likely to be conscious of a great feeling of disappointment, — and no wonder, since no mortal structure can stand for that lodge of the imagination so much more portentous than any house made by hands.

Hawthorne's third story, "The Blithedale Romance," in which the heroine Zenobia has been said to be drawn from Margaret Fuller, a charge emphatically denied by the author, is only inferior to the other three great romances because of the nature of the subject, and the consequent failure to arouse Hawthorne to a degree of imaginative creation which was wont to follow an entirely congenial theme. The story is of contemporary life; hence it lacks the magic of the dim yet potent atmosphere of poetry which haunts the tales of New England's past. Again, there is something of the satiric spirit in his portrayal of the Brook Farm life, and satire, as we have noted before, was with him of a peculiar mordant kind never altogether acceptable. The Brook Farmers, in fact, were offended by the manner in which he handled their beloved dream. And finally, the idea of the book does not involve so fundamental a spiritual problem as do the other books. But with these reservations, "The Blithedale Romance" is a powerful, deeply interesting study, and one who reads the story for story's sake will find that it has a plot which closely holds the attention, and is indeed at times melodramatic, as in the description of Zenobia's death and the tragic finding of her body. The underlying teaching of the story is, as expressed in his own words, "that the whole universe and Providence and Deity to boot make

common cause against a woman who swerves one hair's breadth out of the beaten path" — a theme closely akin to that in Hardy's "Tess of the D'Urbervilles" — indeed, the same theme with variations. It will thus be seen that Hawthorne in this moving romance anticipates a whole modern school of fiction which deals with The New Woman and involves the sexual relations. The motive is of course a serious one, even a large one; yet it has not as direct a significance as his other books; it is sociologic rather than psychologic. Zenobia is one of those strong, stormy characters not easily forgotten. Hawthorne has hardly drawn a more vivid personality, — passionate, impetuous, richly colored; with all the differences between the two, she reminds one of Louie in Mrs. Ward's "David Grieve," both tragic sisters of fate foredoomed to love and death.

The fourth of this major quartet of romances, and the last great book of Hawthorne's life, is "The Marble Faun," in some ways as distinctive and striking a creation as he ever gave the world. Indeed, but for the foreign setting of the tale, it is as characteristic as "The Scarlet Letter" itself. It loses the advantage which the New England setting always gave Hawthorne; but for compensation, it gains the rich mellow atmosphere of the art life and natural beauty to be found in Italy. It is a story of artists' life in that land, and an innocent and most attractive element of Bohemianism is in its pages. From Hawthorne's "Notebooks" we see again and again that much not only in England but on the Continent was disappointing, even repulsive to this thoughtful American; but he fairly basked in the sunshine of Italy, and worshiped before her shrines of imperishable pictures and sculptures. In this delightful atmosphere of autumn romance Hawthorne sets a little group of Americans and

makes them play out their tragic fates. Here again the tragic note is insistent, the subject a spiritual one, the teaching gravely wholesome. In "The Marble Faun," the author has seized upon a theme as profound and spiritually significant as any he ever handled: that it is only by a knowledge of sin, and perhaps by a participation in it, as in the case of Donatello, that the soul can awake and grow; that the faun can change into the man. The romance is thus a subtle spiritual allegory, but so colored and warmed by humanity, so dramatized in scenes and characters, that entirely aside from its moral significance it has enthralling power. The reader of the book must note that Hawthorne essays in it boldly and with distinguishing success a most difficult and dangerous task; namely, in a story of modern life full of reality in its descriptions and incidents and people of the play, he yet introduces a mythic element in Donatello, thereby running the risk of making it all seem ridiculous. But his great art triumphs, and the whole is so harmonious that the reader might easily overlook the artistic problem the novelist has here set himself. The suggestion of the non-human elements in Donatello's personality is conveyed so subtly, with so much of grace and elegance, of sly humor and indirection, that the reader's imagination is aroused, and he accepts the character for very truth.

Externally viewed, the romance deals with the relations of two pairs of lovers: Miriam and her faun lover, Donatello, the sculptor and Hilda, lovely maiden of the doves. But regarded more closely, Hilda and her lover are subsidiary, for relief and contrast, and the central drama is played by Donatello and his love, culminating in the murder he commits, which is the psychologic height of the book as well as the climax in the stage sense. Then follows Dona-

tello's awakening. The character drawing in this fascinating novel is clear, firm, and vital. Donatello is a wonderful creation, and Hilda one of the loveliest portraiture of sweet young maidenhood, sword-proof in her white innocence, ever put into fiction ; nor are the other characters unworthy to stand with these. There is so much of the elusive in this romance, it deals so prevailingly with things of the ideal on the borderland of mystery, that it inevitably puzzles some who wish all to be told, all understood, forgetting that for the soul, hints, suggestions, are often more than mathematical statements. When Hawthorne had finished the story, which appeared in England under the title "Transformation," his publishers requested him to add a final explanatory chapter, which he did with an ill grace, feeling, rightly enough, that the real point had been missed by those who needed such an edition.

In this account of the four great romances of Hawthorne, little attempt has been made to go into the details of their plots ; the hope was to suggest their meaning to the reader, stimulating to a first-hand examination which, after all, is the only way to appreciate such works. In the general enumeration of Hawthorne's work, too, I have confined myself to his greatest productions in tale and romance. He wrote much else, the "Grandfather's Chair" series, many essays, sketches, biographical studies ; but all this constitutes minor work, however interesting. Besides the unfinished "Septimius Felton" already mentioned, another romance, "Doctor Grimshawe's Secret," was published in 1883, edited and finished by his son Julian. It has all the grim tragic quality of Hawthorne, with more of horror and less of satisfaction because of the absence of the clarifying spiritual vision. In 1897 what was announced as Hawthorne's

First Diary appeared, but his son Julian doubts if it be genuine.

Nathaniel Hawthorne was a great romancer; the word has often been used in this sketch in speaking of his fiction. His own idea of the romance can be found in the Preface to "The House of Seven Gables." It means a poetizing of the prosaic facts of human life, presenting them in their more ideal relations, so that life is seen as symbol more than as fact, and its deeper and more abiding meaning is realized. Romance with Hawthorne does not mean to falsify, but rather, in a setting of the past by preference, to suggest the spiritual values of human existence. It is in this sense that he is a romanticist, and all his novels have this character. Of the two or three makers of literature whose position is acknowledged abroad as well as at home, Nathaniel Hawthorne is one; no man has done more unique work in American letters, and his fame is secure as the great romancer of New England life.

THE SNOW IMAGE:

A CHILDISH MIRACLE

One afternoon of a cold winter's day, when the sun shone forth with chilly brightness, after a long storm, two children asked leave of their mother to run out and play in the new-fallen snow. The elder child was a little girl, whom, because she was of a tender and modest disposition, and was thought to be very beautiful, her parents, and other people who were familiar with her, used to call Violet. But her brother was known by the style and title of Peony, on account of the ruddiness of his broad and round little phiz, which made everybody think of sunshine and great scarlet flowers. The father of these two children, a certain Mr. Lindsey, it is important to say, was

an excellent but exceedingly matter-of-fact sort of man, a dealer in hardware, and was sturdily accustomed to take what is called the common-sense view of all matters that came under his consideration. With a heart about as tender as other people's, he had a head as hard and impenetrable, and therefore, perhaps, as empty, as one of the iron pots which it was a part of his business to sell. The mother's character, on the other hand, had a strain of poetry in it, a trait of unworldly beauty,—a delicate and dewy flower, as it were, that had survived out of her imaginative youth, and still kept itself alive amid the dusty realities of matrimony and motherhood.

So, Violet and Peony, as I began with saying, besought their mother to let them run out and play in the new snow; for, though it had looked so dreary and dismal, drifting downward out of the gray sky, it had a very cheerful aspect, now that the sun was shining on it. The children dwelt in a city, and had no wider play-place than a little garden before the house, divided by a white fence from the street. * * *

"Yes, Violet,—yes, my little Peony," said their kind mother; "you may go out and play in the new snow."

Accordingly the good lady bundled up her darlings in woolen jackets and wadded sacks, and put comforters round their necks, and a pair of striped gaiters on each little pair of legs, and worsted mittens on their hands, and gave them a kiss apiece, by way of a spell to keep away Jack Frost. Forth sallied the two children, with a hop-skip-and-jump, that carried them at once into the very heart of a huge snowdrift, whence Violet emerged like a snow bunting, while little Peony floundered out with his round face in full bloom. Then what a merry time had they! * * *

At last, when they had frosted one another all over with handfuls of snow, Violet, after laughing heartily at little Peony's figure, was struck with a new idea.

"You look exactly like a snow image, Peony," said she, "if your cheeks were not so red. And that puts me in mind! Let us make an image out of snow,—an image of a little girl,—and it shall be our sister, and shall run about and play with us all winter long. Won't it be nice?"

"Oh, yes!" cried Peony, as plainly as he could speak, for he was but a little boy. "That will be nice! And mamma shall see it!"

"Yes," answered Violet; "mamma shall see the new little girl. But she must not make her come into the warm parlor; for, you know, our little snow sister will not love the warmth."

And forthwith the children began this great business of making a snow image that should run about; while their mother who was sitting at the window and overheard some of their talk, could not help smiling at the gravity with which they set about it. They really seemed to imagine that there would be no difficulty whatever in creating a live little girl out of the snow. * * *

Indeed, it was an exceedingly pleasant sight, those bright little souls at their task! Moreover, it was really wonderful to observe how knowingly and skillfully they managed the matter. Violet assumed the chief direction, and told Peony what to do, while, with her own delicate fingers, she shaped out all the nicer parts of the snow figure. It seemed, in fact, not so much to be made by the children, as to grow up under their hands, while they were playing and prattling about it. * * *

"Peony, Peony!" cried Violet; * * * "Bring me those light wreaths of snow that have rested on the lower branches of the pear tree. You can clamber on the snowdrift, Peony, and reach them easily. I must have them to make some ringlets for our snow sister's head!"

"Here they are, Violet!" answered the little boy. "Take care you do not break them. Well done! Well done! How pretty!"

"Does she not look sweetly?" said Violet, with a very satisfied tone; "and now we must have some little shining bits of ice, to make the brightness of her eyes. She is not finished yet. Mamma will see how very beautiful she is; but papa will say, 'Tush! nonsense!—come in out of the cold!'" * * *

"What a nice playmate she will be for us, all winter long!" said Violet. "I hope papa will not be afraid of her giving us a cold! Shan't you love her dearly, Peony?"

"Oh, yes!" cried Peony. "And I will hug her, and she shall sit down close by me, and drink some of my warm milk!"

"Oh, no, Peony!" answered Violet, with grave wisdom. "That will not do at all. Warm milk will not be wholesome for our little snow sister. Little snow people, like her, eat nothing but icicles. No, no, Peony; we must not give her anything warm to drink!"

There was a minute or two of silence; for Peony, whose short legs were never weary, had gone on a pilgrimage again to the other side of the garden. All of a sudden, Violet cried out, loudly and joyfully:—

"Look here, Peony! Come quickly! A light has been shining on her cheek out of that rose-colored cloud! and the color does not go away! Is not that beautiful?"

"Yes; it is beau-ti-ful," answered Peony, pronouncing the three syllables with deliberate accuracy. "Oh, Violet, only look at her hair! It is all like gold!"

"Oh, certainly," said Violet, with tranquillity, as if it were very much a matter of course. "That color, you know, comes from the golden clouds, that we see up there in the sky. She is almost finished now. But her lips must be made very red,—redder than her cheeks. Perhaps, Peony, it will make them red, if we both kiss them!"

Accordingly the mother heard two smart little smacks, as if both her children were kissing the snow image on its frozen mouth. But, as this did not seem to make the lips quite red enough, Violet next proposed that the snow child should be invited to kiss Peony's scarlet cheek.

"Come, little snow sister, kiss me!" cried Peony.

"There! she has kissed you," added Violet, "and now her lips are very red. And she blushed a little, too!"

"Oh, what a cold kiss!" cried Peony. * * *

"Mamma! mamma! We have finished our little snow sister, and she is running about the garden with us!"

"What imaginative little beings my children are!" thought the mother, putting the last few stitches into Peony's frock. "And it is strange, too, that they make me almost as much a

child as they themselves are! I can hardly help believing, now, that the snow image has really come to life!"

"Dear mamma!" cried Violet, "pray look out, and see what a sweet playmate we have!"

The mother, being thus entreated, could no longer delay to look forth from the window. * * * And what do you think she saw there? Violet and Peony, of course, her own two darling children. Ah, but whom or what did she, besides? Why, if you will believe me, there was a small figure of a girl, dressed all in white, with rose-tinged cheeks and ringlets of golden hue, playing about the garden with the two children! A stranger though she was, the child seemed to be on familiar terms with Violet and Peony, and they with her, as if all the three had been playmates during the whole of their little lives. The mother thought to herself that it must certainly be the daughter of one of the neighbors, and that, seeing Violet and Peony in the garden, the child had run across the street to play with them. So this kind lady went to the door, intending to invite the little runaway into her comfortable parlor; for, now that the sunshine was withdrawn, the atmosphere, out of doors, was already growing very cold.

But, after opening the house door, she stood an instant on the threshold, hesitating whether she ought to ask the child to come in, or whether she should even speak to her. Indeed, she almost doubted whether it were a real child, after all, or only a light wreath of the new-fallen snow, blown hither and thither about the garden by the intensely cold west wind. There was certainly something very singular in the aspect of the little stranger. Among all the children of the neighborhood, the lady could remember no such face, with its pure white, and delicate rose color, and the golden ringlets tossing about the forehead and cheeks. And as for her dress, which was entirely of white, and fluttering in the breeze, it was such as no reasonable woman would put upon a little girl, when sending her out to play, in the depth of winter. It made this kind and careful mother shiver only to look at those small feet, with nothing in the world on them, except a very thin pair of white slippers. Nevertheless, airily as

she was clad, the child seemed to feel not the slightest inconvenience from the cold, but danced so lightly over the snow that the tips of her toes left hardly a print in its surface; while Violet could but just keep pace with her, and Peony's short legs compelled him to lag behind.

Once, in the course of their play, the strange child placed herself between Violet and Peony, and taking a hand of each, skipped merrily forward, and they along with her. Almost immediately, however, Peony pulled away his little fist, and began to rub it as if the fingers were tingling with cold; while Violet also released herself, though with less abruptness, gravely remarking it was better not to take hold of hands. The white-robed damsel said not a word, but danced about, just as merrily as before. If Violet and Peony did not choose to play with her, she could make just as good a playmate of the brisk and cold west wind, which kept blowing her all about the garden, and took such liberties with her, that they seemed to have been friends for a long time. All this while, the mother stood on the threshold, wondering how a little girl could look so much like a flying snowdrift, or how a snowdrift could look so very like a little girl.

She called Violet, and whispered to her.

"Violet, my darling, what is this child's name?" asked she. "Does she live near us?"

"Why, dearest mamma," answered Violet, laughing to think that her mother did not comprehend so very plain an affair, "this is our little snow sister, whom we have just been making!"

"Yes, dear mamma," cried Peony, running to his mother, and looking up simply into her face. "This is our snow image! Is it not a nice 'ittle child?" * * *

While mamma still hesitated what to think and what to do, the street gate was thrown open, and the father of Violet and Peony appeared, wrapped in a pilot-cloth sack, with a fur cap drawn down over his ears, and the thickest of gloves upon his hands. Mr. Lindsey was a middle-aged man with a weary and yet a happy look in his wind-flushed and frost-pinched face, as if he had been busy all the day long, and was glad to get back to

his quiet home. His eyes brightened at the sight of his wife and children, although he could not help uttering a word or two of surprise, at finding the whole family in the open air, on so bleak a day, and after sunset too. He soon perceived the little white stranger, sporting to and fro in the garden, like a dancing snow wreath, and the flock of snowbirds fluttering above her head.

"Pray, what little girl may that be?" inquired this very sensible man. "Surely her mother must be crazy, to let her go out in such bitter weather as it has been to-day, with only that flimsy white gown, and those thin slippers!"

"My dear husband," said his wife, "I know no more about the little thing than you do. Some neighbor's child, I suppose. Our Violet and Peony," she added, laughing at herself for repeating so absurd a story, "insist that she is nothing but a snow image, which they have been busy about in the garden, almost all the afternoon."

As she said this, the mother glanced her eyes toward the spot where the children's snow image had been made. What was her surprise, on perceiving that there was not the slightest trace of so much labor!—no image at all!—no piled-up heap of snow!—nothing whatever, save the prints of little footsteps around a vacant space!

"This is very strange!" said she.

"What is strange, dear mother?" asked Violet. "Dear father, do not you see how it is? This is our snow image, which Peony and I have made, because we wanted another playmate. Did not we, Peony?"

"Yes, papa," said crimson Peony. "This be our 'ittle snow sister. Is she not beau-ti-ful? But she gave me such a cold kiss!"

"Poh, nonsense, children!" cried their good, honest father, who, as we have already intimated, had an exceedingly common-sensible way of looking at matters. "Do not tell me of making live figures out of snow. Come, wife; this little stranger must not stay out in the bleak air a moment longer. We will bring her into the parlor; and you shall give her a supper of warm bread and milk, and make her as comfortable as you can. Mean-

while, I will inquire among the neighbors; or, if necessary, send the city crier about the streets, to give notice of a lost child." * * *

"Husband! dear husband!" said his wife, in a low voice, — for she had been looking narrowly at the snow child, and was more perplexed than ever, — "there is something very singular in all this. You will think me foolish, — but — but — may it not be that some invisible angel has been attracted by the simplicity and good faith with which our children set about their undertaking? May he not have spent an hour of his immortality in playing with those dear little souls? and so the result is what we call a miracle. No, no! Do not laugh at me; I see what a foolish thought it is!"

"My dear wife," replied the husband, laughing heartily, "you are as much a child as Violet and Peony."

And in one sense so she was, for all through life she had kept her heart full of childlike simplicity and faith, which was as pure and clear as crystal; and, looking at all matters through this transparent medium, she sometimes saw truths so profound, that other people laughed at them as nonsense and absurdity.

But now kind Mr. Lindsey had entered the garden, breaking away from his two children, who still sent their shrill voices after him, beseeching him to let the snow child stay and enjoy herself in the cold west wind. As he approached, the snowbirds took to flight. The little white damsel, also, fled backward, shaking her head, as if to say, "Pray, do not touch me!" and roguishly, as it appeared, leading him through the deepest of the snow. Once, the good man stumbled, and floundered down upon his face, so that, gathering himself up again, with the snow sticking to his rough pilot-cloth sack, he looked as white and wintry as a snow image of the largest size. Some of the neighbors, meanwhile, seeing them from their windows, wondered what could possess poor Mr. Lindsey to be running about his garden in pursuit of a snowdrift, which the west wind was driving hither and thither! At length, after a vast deal of trouble, he chased the little stranger into a corner, where she could not possibly escape him. His wife had been looking on, and, it being nearly

twilight, was wonderstruck to observe how the snow child gleamed and sparkled, and how she seemed to shed a glow all round about her; and when driven into the corner, she positively glistened like a star! It was a frosty kind of brightness, too, like that of an icicle in the moonlight. The wife thought it strange that good Mr. Lindsey should see nothing remarkable in the snow child's appearance.

"Come, you odd little thing!" cried the honest man, seizing her by the hand, "I have caught you at last, and will make you comfortable in spite of yourself. We will put a nice warm pair of worsted stockings on your frozen little feet, and you shall have a good thick shawl to wrap yourself in. Your poor white nose, I am afraid, is actually frost-bitten. But we will make it all right. Come along in."

And so, with a most benevolent smile on his sagacious visage, all purple as it was with the cold, this very well-meaning gentleman took the snow child by the hand and led her toward the house. She followed him, droopingly and reluctant; for all the glow and sparkle was gone out of her figure; and whereas just before she had resembled a bright, frosty, star-gemmed evening, with a crimson gleam on the cold horizon, she now looked as dull and languid as a thaw. * * *

A puff of the west wind blew against the snow child, and again she sparkled like a star.

"Snow!" repeated good Mr. Lindsey, drawing the reluctant guest over his hospitable threshold. "No wonder she looks like snow. She is half frozen, poor little thing! But a good fire will put everything to rights."

Without further talk, and always with the same best intentions, this highly benevolent and common-sensible individual led the little white damsel—drooping, drooping, drooping, more and more—out of the frosty air, and into his comfortable parlor. A Heidenberg stove, filled to the brim with intensely burning anthracite, was sending a bright gleam through the isinglass of its iron door, and causing the vase of water on its top to fume and bubble with excitement. A warm, sultry smell was diffused throughout the room. A thermometer on the wall furthest from

the stove stood at eighty degrees. The parlor was hung with red curtains, and covered with a red carpet, and looked just as warm as it felt. The difference betwixt the atmosphere here and the cold, wintry twilight out of doors was like stepping at once from Nova Zembla to the hottest part of India, or from the North Pole into an oven. Oh, this was a fine place for the little white stranger!

The common-sensible man placed the snow child on the hearth rug, right in front of the hissing and fuming stove.

"Now she will be comfortable!" cried Mr. Lindsey, rubbing his hands and looking about him, with the pleasantest smile you ever saw. "Make yourself at home, my child."

Sad, sad and drooping, looked the little white maiden, as she stood on the hearth rug, with the hot blast of the stove striking through her like a pestilence. Once, she threw a glance wistfully toward the window, and caught a glimpse, through its red curtains, of the snow-covered roofs, and the stars glimmering frostily, and all the delicious intensity of the cold night. The bleak wind rattled the window panes, as if it were summoning her to come forth. But there stood the snow child, drooping, before the hot stove!

But the common-sensible man saw nothing amiss.

"Come, wife," said he, "let her have a pair of thick stockings and a woollen shawl or a blanket directly; and tell Dora to give her some warm supper as soon as the milk boils. You, Violet and Peony, amuse your little friend. She is out of spirits, you see, at finding herself in a strange place. For my part, I will go around among the neighbors, and find out where she belongs."

The mother, meanwhile, had gone in search of the shawl and stockings; for her own view of the matter, however subtle and delicate, had given way, as it always did, to the stubborn materialism of her husband. Without heeding the remonstrances of his two children, who still kept murmuring that their little snow sister did not love the warmth, good Mr. Lindsey took his departure, shutting the parlor door carefully behind him. Turning up the collar of his sack over his ears, he emerged from the house, and had barely reached the street gate, when he was

recalled by the screams of Violet and Peony, and the rapping of a thimble finger against the parlor window.

"Husband! husband!" cried his wife, showing her horror-stricken face through the window panes. "There is no need of going for the child's parents!"

"We told you so, father!" screamed Violet and Peony, as he reentered the parlor. "You would bring her in; and now our poor — dear — beau-ti-ful little snow sister is thawed!"

And their own sweet little faces were already dissolved in tears; so that their father, seeing what strange things occasionally happen in this everyday world, felt not a little anxious lest his children might be going to thaw too! In the utmost perplexity, he demanded an explanation of his wife. She could only reply that, being summoned to the parlor by the cries of Violet and Peony, she found no trace of the little white maiden, unless it were the remains of a heap of snow, which, while she was gazing at it, melted quite away upon the hearth rug.

"And there you see all there is left of it!" added she, pointing to a pool of water, in front of the stove. * * *

This, you will observe, was one of those rare cases which yet will occasionally happen, where common sense finds itself at fault. The remarkable story of the snow image, though to that sagacious class of people to whom good Mr. Lindsey belongs it may seem but a childish affair, is, nevertheless, capable of being moralized in various methods, greatly for their edification. One of its lessons, for instance, might be that it behooves men, and especially men of benevolence, to consider well what they are about, and, before acting on their philanthropic purposes, to be quite sure that they comprehend the nature and all the relations of the business in hand. * * *

But, after all, there is no teaching anything to wise men of good Mr. Lindsey's stamp. They know everything — oh, to be sure! — everything that has been, and everything that is, and everything that, by any future possibility, can be. And, should some phenomenon of nature or providence transcend their system, they will not recognize it, even if it come to pass under their very noses.

CHAPTER VI

EMERSON

IN the center of the remarkable little group of New England writers who stood for God and country, who were idealists, yet thoroughly of the soil, into whose words the very genius of their land seems to have passed, the literary historian must always place Ralph Waldo Emerson. As unique as Poe or Hawthorne, he seems more American than either; there is in his work something so high and so homely, that the man behind the work comes to be regarded with a touching affection, his character making him beloved even as his genius has made him honored.

Merely to mention Emerson's name is to bring up a vision of New England, to think of Massachusetts, of Boston, of Harvard, of Concord. When the Athens of America is spoken of nowadays, there is in the phrase a suggestion of newspaper raillery; but when Emerson was in his heyday of influence and activity, the little city had reason to be proud of its intellectual giants, of the standing near and far of its literary leaders. Then, American literature looked to Boston and its vicinity as naturally as Englishmen look to London.

In this favored city Emerson was born May 25, 1803. While these words are being written, various preparations are making to celebrate the anniversary of his birth; the

memory of him is green, his labor is vitally affecting a later century, his soul goes marching on.

The Puritan strain in him went deep. Back in the early sixteenth century, one Peter Bulkeley, Fellow of St. John's College at Cambridge, England, found the persecutions of Archbishop Laud intolerable and fled the country, coming to the United States and settling in Concord. He was Emerson's first ancestor upon this soil. Those deriving from him were prevaillingly clerical and scholastic, Puritan too in the good sense, though comparatively recent investigation shows that there was an admixture of Episcopalianism and a more genial manner of taking the world in the maternal branch of the family. America gave no man better forefathers; John Burroughs thinks that there is a certain lack of red blood in Emerson because of his clerical stock; but we prefer here to dwell upon the advantage of such a past.

As to his immediate family, his grandfather William was a pastor at Concord in the eighteenth century, building the Old Manse, which was later to take on a magic meaning from its association with the Emerson family and Hawthorne. His father, a second William, was pastor of the first church in Boston; both of them men of scholarship and literary accomplishment. The father died when Waldo was eight, so that the boy's character, so far as home influence went, was more largely molded by his mother and his aunt. Emerson's mother was one of those typically strong, sweet, serene New England women whose son exhibits a poise and dignity, a sort of Olympian calm which is a direct inheritance: a benignity of a higher place even than Parnassus. Her maiden name was Ruth Haskins; she was of a distinguished Boston family, and a person of deep and genuine piety. When an unmarried girl she registered in her diary a vow

to keep a record of the happy and sad events of her experience, that she might see the hand of God working therein, and so come to a better understanding of His ways. There is in this the true flavor of the old-time noble Puritan strain. It was by her economy and self-sacrifice, when the father's death had left her and her six sons but poorly off, that all the children received sound educations — an example of the great unwritten epic of motherhood. Emerson was a scholar at the Boston Latin School, still a noted local institution, leaving it to enter Harvard in 1817, when he was fourteen years of age, which says much as to the gradual lifting of the requirements for college entrance during the past century. Emerson was no infant phenomenon, nor even precocious in his school and college life; he was just a middling good scholar, standing neither high nor low, but possessing marked tastes for good reading, and recognized by his mates as a bookish, thoughtful fellow, interesting in a quiet way. He was weak in mathematics (which seems to be generally the *bête noire* of those called to literature), but showed ability in forensics and composition. A fellow-student describes him as "a spiritual-looking boy in blue nankeen," and declares that he loved him and thought him "so angelic and remarkable." Without being a prig or a muff, Emerson seems from his earliest boyhood to have had something in him which made his fellows regard him as of exceptional quality. After graduation in 1821, the young man, or rather boy of eighteen, taught school in the neighborhood for four years, during which he found out that the profession of pedagogue offered him few attractions. It was the most natural thing in the world that one of his family should turn from school-mastering to theology. He entered the Unitarian Divinity School at Harvard in 1825,

and although not a regularly enrolled scholar, he studied there for three years, and was licensed to preach in 1826. It was equally natural that he should be ordained as a Unitarian since, as Dr. Holmes puts it in his "Life of Emerson," it was "the dominating form of belief in the more highly educated classes of both the two great New England centers, the town of Boston and the University of Cambridge." James Freeman Clarke and William E. Channing, names to conjure with, were then preaching in the city. At the time he was ordained, Emerson's health was poor; he went South to South Carolina and Florida for recuperation, and during this tour preached in several Southern towns, as he did on his return in various New England places, including Northampton, Concord, and Boston; the fledgling trying his wings.

He must have given satisfaction, for in 1829, the year after his studies were finished, he received an invitation to become the colleague of the Rev. Henry Ware, the much esteemed pastor of the Second Unitarian Church in Boston, called the Old North Church. In this same year too he married Ellen Louisa Tucker. Life opened brightly for the young minister. But clouds were already above the horizon; his wife, who was of delicate habit, sickened and died of consumption early in 1832, and by the fall of the same year we find Emerson preaching a sermon in which he states his objections of conscience to administering the Lord's Supper,—a declaration followed by his resignation, since the church committee's views were diametrically opposite. This sermon of Emerson's was a preliminary shot in a battle which has ever since been waged, and by firing it Emerson first stood forth as the great Independent of thought he was all his days to be. The act of standing boldly by his con-

victions was a brave one ; it meant trouble, financial risk, possibility of a loss of social standing. Emerson never hesitated. Such examples of courage are rare. He parted from the congregation with no bitterness, with friendliness on both sides ; and was face to face with the problem of a new life work. As a preacher the impression made by Emerson had been unique ; never an orator, there was nevertheless rare charm about his manner of speaking or in what he said. He was awkward, slow and hesitating in delivery, and often lost his place by shuffling his manuscript, yet the sweet dignity of his presence and the high things he had to communicate held his audiences as in a vise. One Scotchman hearing him in Edinburgh, declared that Emerson had for him more attraction than the great Dr. Chalmers.

When his wife died, Emerson's health was precarious, and since no definite work was in sight, he went abroad in the winter of 1833-1834, going to Sicily and thence to the Continent and England. By the settlement of his wife's share in the Tucker estate, Emerson found himself possessed of a twelve-hundred dollar income, quite sufficient in those days, and with his simple manner of life in a place like Concord, to make him comfortable, especially as this sum was soon increased by his literary and lecture work. The diary of his travels shows he got more out of meeting distinguished folk, especially literary men like Landor, Coleridge, Wordsworth, De Quincey, and Carlyle, than from contact with pictures, statues, and cathedrals. He states in a letter that his main reason for the trip was to see three or four writers. Indeed, the world of historic lore and tradition Emerson was by nature less sympathetic to than are most tourists. Emerson's meeting with Carlyle was the beginning of the famous friendship with which, as embodied

in the exchange of letters, the world is now familiar. His first impression of the Chelsea Sage was most favorable. Frank liking was begotten on both sides, and the bond thus struck lasted for life.

Upon returning to his native shores in 1833 Emerson took up lecturing, a vocation he followed for the next fifteen years; he spoke on his foreign travels, or of great men like Angelo, Milton, and Burke, or on popular themes of instruction, such as "The Relation of Man to the Globe." The year after his return, Emerson settled in Concord, first living with his kinsman, Dr. Ripley, in the Old Manse, and the next year settling in the "plain, square, wooden house," set about with horse-chestnuts and evergreens, and for many years now a place pointed out as one of the chief jewels in the crown of this wonderful little town. There he lived and died, and there his daughter Ellen still resides. It is to Emerson and Hawthorne primarily, that Concord owes its international reputation. But if its Revolutionary record were not a noble one, if, of old, it had not been the place where

Once the embattled farmers stood
And fired the shot heard round the world,

or the group of literary men and women who distinguish it had never gathered there, its natural beauty would have made its name pleasant. It might indeed, as Dr. Holmes suggests, "sit for its portrait as an ideal New England town." Only twenty miles from Boston, it is within easy reach of all that city affords, while retaining the charm of a rural place, but its main glory lies in the fact that certain great people lived there.

There are many reports of Emerson's lecture experiences, some of them amusing. One hears of his absent-minded-

ness, the ease with which he lost his place in the manuscript from which he was reading, and the dignity he exhibited as he adjusted the sheets while his audience waited in patience, perhaps in wonder. But a like impression was made by Emerson, whether as preacher or teacher; indeed his lectures were always lay sermons. Their unconventionality, poetic beauty, and profound earnestness, were all elements of his success. Above all, was the superb elevation of the speaker, who dealt at first hand, simply and sincerely and with a certain lovable physical awkwardness, with great personalities, great ideas, great issues. A lecture thus pitched and aimed took on the nature of an intellectual and moral experience to a sensitive soul in the seats. It was the message of a man who in his own description was "enamored of moral perfection"; it was, in a word, inspiring. Few men in private or public begot love as did Emerson. When he began his platform work, the old-time lyceum was in full sway; it meant the popular presentation of serious subjects which allowed rural communities, people detached from the centers, to come into contact with the best minds of the day. Emerson was for years the marked figure in these lyceum lectures, which have now, in a day when one hundred lectures are given to one aforetime, been exchanged for club addresses, University Extension talks, Chautauqua courses, and twenty more methods of popular education. His lectures were made books of in due time, adding a little thus to his income, but not much. Lecture prices in those days were much below what men of distinction receive to-day; in country lyceums Emerson's fee was but ten dollars with his traveling expenses; in Boston he received fifty dollars, but he often went to near-by places, like Worcester, for such a sum as twenty dollars.

A year after he purchased his Concord house Emerson made his second marriage, Miss Lidian Jackson becoming his wife; she was a lady possessed of property. The quiet, studious, and in the high sense influential life led by Emerson for many years offers few striking points for the chronicler. In one of his letters to Carlyle he draws a picture of the retired, simple, domestic life he led:—

I occupy, or improve, as we Yankees say, two acres only of God's earth; on which is my house, my kitchen garden, my orchard of thirty young trees, my empty barn. My house is now a very good one for comfort, and abounding in room. Besides my house I have, I believe, \$22,000, whose income in ordinary years is six per cent. I have no other tithe or glebe except the income of my winter lectures, which was last winter \$800. Well, with this income, here at home I am a rich man. I stay at home, and go abroad, at my own instance. I have food, warmth, leisure, books, friends. Go away from home, I am rich no longer. I never have a dollar to spend on a fancy. As no wise man, I suppose, ever was rich in the sense of freedom to spend, because of the inundations of claims, so neither am I, who am not wise. But at home I am rich,—rich enough for ten brothers.

The most noteworthy outward happenings during the remainder of his long and fruitful career were the European trips of 1847–1848 and 1872–1873, the latter extensive enough to take in Egypt; and a California trip in 1871 at a time when it was far more of an undertaking than in these days of overland limited expresses and Pullman comforts.

Worldly honors came to him of all men least caring for them, when in 1866 Harvard conferred her coveted LL.D., and elected him a college overseer. From 1841, when the first series of his Essays appeared, he published steadily; the second series following in 1844, the "Poems" in 1847, and such other typical works, as "Representative

Men" in 1850, "English Traits" in 1856, the "Conduct of Life" in 1860, another volume of poems, "May Day and Other Pieces," 1867, "Society and Solitude," 1870, "Letters and Social Aims" in 1876, and the posthumously published "Natural History of the Intellect" in 1893. This last book was made up of lectures and reprints from the *Dial*, the famous transcendental periodical of which Margaret Fuller was the editor.

In 1872 his house was burned, and the shock and excitement weakened his condition, which already showed a general breaking up of the vital forces, and in particular, a sad loss of memory. The final tour abroad was undertaken after the loss of his house, and on his return next year, he was welcomed by his loving townspeople with music and with flowers, and enabled to enter a home rebuilt and improved by friendly benefactions—to pass nearly ten years of at least painless decay. In the late sixties this physical decline had begun, and nothing in the history of letters is more pathetic than the picture of this great man attending Longfellow's funeral and remarking to a friend, "That gentleman was a sweet, beautiful soul, but I have entirely forgotten his name." When he fell on sleep in 1882, and was laid to rest in the Sleepy Hollow cemetery, where Hawthorne and Thoreau also rest, he had almost completed his seventy-ninth year, and for more than a decade his superb mental quality had been a thing of the past; gradually he had lapsed into a state that was well-nigh that of childishness.

Looking at his life as a whole, it had been one of singular felicity and honor. The loss of his son Waldo was the sharpest grief of his life; but no lover of poetry who reads the lofty and touching "Threnody" in which that son's memory is embalmed, will feel that the experience was in

vain, since it was thus translated into high song. It would be a mistake, then, to bear down too heavily upon the pathetic close of Emerson's life. When he returned to Europe in 1847, he was recognized as the peer of the great men of his day. At Concord his house was for many years a center for the most enlightened culture, naturally visited by distinguished folk from different parts of the land or from abroad. The *Dial* coterie was there to be found; Hawthorne and Alcott were near-by neighbors; Thoreau, that shy genius of the woods, dropped in at any moment. Few men have ever been loved by all conditions of men and women as was Emerson. Not alone his compeers, his fellows of thought and deed, but the common folk who were far from understanding his message, worshiped the sweet, grave face of him, the kindly friend and neighbor, the man whose very look was a benison as he passed by. To this day, the memory of Emerson in Concord is like the sound of bells, in tune and sweet. Where the stately Hawthorne was revered and feared as he walked aloof, Emerson was beloved. He would lean over the fence or against the woodpile, talking of the most homely affairs with some farmer, or over a piece of morning mince pie, settle the affairs of the universe. High thinking and plain living met in him as in few of the sons of Adam. The odd combination in him of Yankee practicality, of shrewdness tempered by kindly humor, along with the loftiest spirituality and the wisdom of Brahma, brought him seemingly into equal touch with heaven and earth. There is nothing like his character and accomplishment in the full range of American literature.

When in 1836, a short while after he had settled in Concord, a little volume called "Nature" appeared in print, Ralph Waldo Emerson made his manifesto to the world. In

it Emerson spoke practically a new dialect ; it took more than a decade to sell a few hundred copies — yet this book is essentially a revelation of the man ; his fundamental conception of the unique interest and importance of the human soul set in the midst of what we call nature and the world of men, with its one business to develop character and attain to perfection, is here set forth. And in all his subsequent writings, whatever the subject, his message is the same, the theme but a variation thereupon. The distinctive quality of Emerson as a writer comes from two things in the main : the single-eyed, clear purpose of his teaching and the incommunicable charm of his way of saying his say. He wished to awaken his readers to the truth that life is much more symbol than fact ; that the spiritual significance in a piece of coal is of vastly more importance than its power of combustion. In the whole outer universe he found this spiritual meaning ; and then bade every honest soul, with no attention to convention or platitude of tradition, to bring his own nature into accord with this one great principle which guides and guards the worlds.

Because of his genius for getting at the central fact of spirit, impatiently brushing aside what is secondary or merely ornamental, he inevitably became an Independent in religious thought, a radical, as the orthodox would say. But he was, in the deepest and profoundest sense, an awakening and a purifying force, especially upon the thoughtful young, and those sensitive to spiritual appeal. Emerson in his magnificently high and wholesome address to the young person to be true to his best and find God in all things and “good in everything,” preaches a pantheistic doctrine which has been a banner-cry and a tonic draught to countless spirits. For his own generation he was a mighty influence :

and his place in American literature has strengthened as this influence has been the more realized. If his message falls dull on the ears of young Americans of the present dispensation, with less of flutelike loveliness and of gravely serene power, the reflection is upon the age, not upon Emerson, for he was never more needed in his beautiful idealism than he is at present.

The next year after the book "Nature" he delivered the Phi Beta Kappa oration at Harvard, printed with the title "The American Scholar." This is the address described by Lowell as "our intellectual Declaration of Independence." Read to-day, it calls like a clarion to the native youth to believe in country, in its aims and potentialities, and to believe in himself as a possible helper of country. It is also a noble defense of the life intellectual and its sore need in such a land as ours.

It would be a mistake to think of Emerson as if his essays were entirely devoted to a study of the oversoul, soaring in the superior regions of abstract philosophy. Plenty of his themes are homely, direct, practical: upon love, conversation, manners, conduct, experience. The reader, too, should beware of the shallow criticism that, after reading one such essay, it is hard to say just what it is about, to draw a diagram of its course. Emerson's writings are not primarily intellectual, ratiocinative; he speaks from and to the spirit. His value is in the way of stimulation, suggestion; after reading a typical essay of his the whole nature is clarified and attuned to a higher plain of living. This most precious influence comes only from the few great idealists and poets of the literary world; and the good that is derived from them is one that, just because it is so precious, cannot be expressed in terms of intellectual gain, or

used satisfactorily in a college test. I would rather have a young person during the formative period really responsive to Emerson, really in love with him, than letter-perfect in a dozen isms and ologies.

If Emerson deals with an apparently concrete subject — as with some great personality in his "Representative Men" — or with national qualities and customs, as in his study of the life of our British cousins in "English Traits" — he views life in such wise as continually to bring the reader back to this position of his: belief in character as the sole test, in the spiritual significance of life, as the only real thing. Thus the whole body of his writings have a unity such as rarely happens. The essays are often referred to for their alleged lack of unity, and humorous stories fly about to the effect that Emerson walked in the woods, writing detached Orphic sentences, which on returning home he then shuffled together without order or sequence, and, presto! a lecture, later to become an essay. Nothing is more foolish and misleading. There is the subtlest and strongest of connections in every essay and, as we said, in all his work: the wholeness of a consistent view, of an insistent purpose, of a unique preoccupation with the things of God. The greatness of Emerson does not lie in his being a philosopher, in the sense of one who constructs a definite system: for that he was not. He cared nothing for mere formal consistency, which is, he tells us, "the bugbear of small minds." His business was to drop seed thoughts of life into the soul of his time, and as he sowed, to make the labor seem like a song, because of the beauty of his gestures — the words of a poet.

This leads on to the important matter of Emerson's style. He is fundamentally a great man of letters as well as a spirit-

ual force, for the good and sufficient reason that he had a genius for the happy word,—for a certain fashion of form, a winsome and lovely manner of expressing his thought such as the world always recognizes to mean a gift for literature. Matthew Arnold, in writing of Emerson, emphasizes his spiritual quality rather than his literary gift. But it is doubtful if Emerson would have so influenced Arnold in the latter's youth, if there had not been in him something of the magic of a literary master. Always, when Emerson is at his best, it is fascinating to hear him talk. Listen to him, for example, as he begins to speak of love in the essay of that name : —

The natural association of the sentiment of love with the hey-day of the blood seems to require, that in order to portray it in vivid tints, which every youth and maid should confess to be true to their throbbing experience, one must not be too old. The delicious fancies of youth reject the least savor of a mature philosophy, as chilling with age and pedantry their purple bloom. And, therefore, I know I incur the imputation of unnecessary hardness and stoicism from those who compose the Court and Parliament of Love. But from these formidable censors I shall appeal to my seniors. For it is to be considered that this passion of which we speak, though it begin with the young, yet forsakes not the old, or rather suffers no one who is truly its servant to grow old, but makes the aged participators of it, not less than the tender maiden, though in a different and nobler sort.

When one has read only thus far, one is fully prepared for rich delights to come. I have had young men and women in a college class after this essay or the one upon Nature had been read aloud to them, come to me with flushed cheeks and humid eyes, to testify to their delight in it, the wonder of the awakened lyric thrill in their quick young hearts. Emerson was not only the general friend and

aider of those who live in the spirit ; he exhorted like an angel. "Hitch your wagon to a star," he cried to youth, and straightway youth is so enchanted by the figure that it falls in love with the idea. His manner of writing unites in a remarkable way the greatest dignity and elevation with the homeliest, I might almost say, the quaintest of idiomatic quality. His rural life, the simplicity always to be found in his habits and surroundings, entered into his metaphors and the very music of his marshaled words. What of austere and select there was in him as an inheritance of eight generations of clerical ancestors, was thus freshened by the fine flavor of the soil in his style. The directness and honesty of the man's nature, too, are reflected in his writings, and become a head-mark of it. No maker of literature ever illustrated better Buffon's dictum that "the style's the man" than Ralph Waldo Emerson. The distinction of his prose is a distinction which was felt in his conversation, in his very presence : it is a distinction of character.

It cannot be too plainly understood that Emerson's so-called obscurity is never an obscurity in his way of saying things ; no man ever handled English with more lucidity. His sentences are short and never forced or twisted in construction ; his words are rarely such as the wayfaring man may not understand, and only then when the theme demands them. No, if Emerson is difficult to read, the difficulty inheres in the nature of the things he talks of or in the unpreparedness of the listener. Dealing as he prevailsingly does with spiritual verities, it was inevitable that at times he should soar to such a height as to embarrass the pedestrian who would follow him. A trip in a balloon is in some respects less easy and comfortable than a faring through one of earth's thoroughfares ; yet there

may be certain advantages in the way of air and landscape in the aerial car. It may also be added that Emerson in putting his lectures into essay form (and all his essays were originally lectures) cared less than do most writers to indicate the seams or interstices of his pattern; but nevertheless my firm belief has been already expressed that these essays are always a close-knit organism. It would be an excellent exercise for the reader interested in this matter to try to indicate the skeleton of Emerson's thought, its ordered progress, in a typical paper like that on "Compensation" or "Politics."

To Emerson there was great beauty in human character and in the ordered cosmos of which man is a part. His admiration of personality and his belief that it was the key to all progress made him an Individualist, and this he remained consistently to the end, during the period when man's associative activity was fast developing both as a practical fact and a social ideal. For that very reason there was need of such a thinker as Emerson, lest society in love with the new toy called "association" should forget that, in a sense, the truest strength lies in independent action. Emerson's crying-up of the importance of independence, of individualism, was a form of romanticism; it meant that freer expression of personality which, in all lands, has been a chief characteristic of the literary tendency called the romantic. And Emerson's habit of placing man in the midst of a world which is made for his benefit and of which he is the interpreter and explainer, is saved from all narrowness and crudity by the large nobility of his general view, which has in it a touch of Oriental mysticism, of Buddhistic embrace of the All.

Emerson was also a great Independent, as we have seen,

not only in politics and religion, but in the far deeper sense of one who preached self-reliance (read his bracing essay of this title) whereby a man was not dependent upon position or money or the external pleasures of the world, but, finding resources within himself, and in harmony with the universal, moved along his elected path undisturbed, fearless, and calmly content. In one of his essays he pictures a bustling, nervous, fevered modern man suddenly rebuked by Nature herself, surrounding him with peace and beauty: "Why so hot, little sir?" speaks the voice. This is typical of Emerson's attitude; it is one of the explanations of his wholesome magic upon the unspoiled, susceptible heart.

/ In his prose Emerson was thus a noble teacher, and he will continue to be, so long as the people have ears to hear. His message is not temporary; one is aware of the accent of the eternal in its cadences. And he was, moreover, a master of English prose, great for the way he said a thing as well as for what he said.

/ But Emerson has a double claim upon our regard as a writer; he is not only essayist but poet. To some, for quality and high message, he is unsurpassed upon the American Parnassus. This opinion, however, needs qualification. Emerson's natural medium of expression was prose. He had mastered the art of prose utterance. He never entirely mastered that of metrical writing. He wrote exquisite lines, phrases, occasionally even whole poems; but he could not be sure of himself, he might at any time halt in meter, or become harsh and unhappy in language, or choke poetic expression by the colder usages of philosophy. His technique, in other words, was not certain, and there seems to have been a natural defect in his feeling for metrical movement; either this, or lack of the work which brings

certitude. In thought, in feeling, often in the noble marriage of thought and expression, and certainly in the quality of his poetic utterance, Emerson was one of the major poets of America ; but too often only in flashes. Hence, on the whole, the necessity of placing his verse below his prose works, and this in spite of the fact that his greatest verse may with perfect propriety be pointed to as the finest emanation of his genius.

✓ Emerson himself was aware of this defect in him for verse expression. He once said to Mr. J. T. Trowbridge : " I feel it a hardship that — with something of a lover's passion for what is to me the most precious thing in life — poetry — I have no gift of fluency in it, only a rude and stammering utterance." The beautiful humility of this will strike everybody who listens to it ; it has a deep pathos. But it contains sound self-criticism, and be it noted that Emerson always and everywhere in his life and literature reveals himself as a good critic of himself and others. He was not deluded about matters of importance, a strain of splendid common sense ran through all his idealism.

His first book of poems was not published until he was forty-four years of age. In this lateness of appearance there is food for reflection. The poet who all his life must sing, and who, in the twenties, often does his most lasting and lovely work — think of Byron and Keats and Shelley — would not have thus waited until middle age ; it suggests that with Emerson verse was not the main outlet of expression. It was not until twenty years later, in 1867, that his second volume appeared ; and here again there is the hint of the occasional, the aside — of something loved, by his own confession, yet not chosen steadily to convey his message to the world, as, for instance, Browning chose it and continued to

use the verse medium for a lifetime, let the world say what it would.

But the wild charm, the impressive high distinction of Emerson at his best in verse, no true lover of poetry can gainsay. Lines and passages of his have entered widely into quotation and almost daily use : —

The frolic architecture of the snow.

And yet, for all his faith could see,
I would not the good bishop be.

Thou shalt not wave thy staff in air,
Or dip thy paddle in the lake,
But it carves the bow of beauty there,
And the ripples in rhymes the oar forsake.

Daughters of Time, the hypocritic Days.

Here once the embattled farmers stood,
And fired the shot heard round the world.

One accent of the Holy Ghost
The heedless world hath never lost.

Oh, tenderly the haughty day
Fills her blue urn with fire !

These and fifty more fragments rise in the mind of the Emerson lover as among the precious and permanent things of the native anthology. For the very reason of his careless technique, an appreciation of Emerson's quality is a test of one's real recognition of the immense merit of his song. You must know it in spite of its failings ; as if one were to pierce through Cinderella's homespun garb to the young beauty beneath. His native endowment for poetic expression was very great ; had he been willing or able to take the *Ars Poetica* more seriously, realizing that technique is a

good servant though a bad master, there are no poetic heights he might not have attained.

But there are a few pieces in which, while the form is adequate, the message is purely Emersonian. The "Concord Hymn" is one such, perhaps the most familiar of all his song : —

HYMN

SUNG AT THE COMPLETION OF THE CONCORD MONUMENT

April 19, 1836

By the rude bridge that arched the flood,
Their flag to April's breeze unfurled,
Here once the embattled farmers stood,
And fired the shot heard round the world.

The foe long since in silence slept ;
Alike the conqueror silent sleeps ;
And Time the ruined bridge has swept
Down the dark stream which seaward creeps.

On this green bank, by this soft stream,
We set to-day a votive stone ;
That memory may their deed redeem,
When, like our sires, our sons are gone.

Spirit that made those heroes dare
To die, and leave their children free,
Bid Time and Nature gently spare
The shaft we raise to them and thee.

Deeply expressive of Emerson's religious creed is "The Problem," in which his recognition of God in everything is breathed forth along with a kind of noble impatience of the shackles of dogma, and the exclusiveness of sects. This poem is starred with fine and often-quoted couplets, and

is one of the best known he ever wrote. It is unequal in execution, and the final lines are by no means commensurate with what goes before ; but as a whole it has great dignity and distinction of manner.

THE PROBLEM

I like a church ; I like a cowl ;
I love a prophet of the soul ;
And on my heart monastic aisles
Fall like sweet strains, or pensive smiles ;
Yet not for all his faith can see
Would I that cowed churchman be.

Why should the vest on him allure,
Which I could not on me endure ?

Not from a vain or shallow thought
His awful Jove young Phidias brought,
Never from lips of cunning fell
The thrilling Delphic oracle ;
Out from the heart of nature rolled
The burdens of the Bible old ;
The litanies of nations came,
Like the volcano's tongue of flame,
Up from the burning core below, —
The canticles of love and woe ;
The hand that rounded Peter's dome,
And groined the aisles of Christian Rome,
Wrought in a sad sincerity ;
Himself from God he could not free ;
He builded better than he knew ; —
The conscious stone to beauty grew.

Know'st thou what wove yon wood bird's nest
Of leaves, and feathers from her breast ?
Or how the fish outbuilt her shell,
Painting with morn each annual cell ?

Or how the sacred pine tree adds
To her old leaves new myriads?
Such and so grew these holy piles,
Whilst love and terror laid the tiles.
Earth proudly wears the Parthenon,
As the best gem upon her zone;
And Morning opes with haste her lids,
To gaze upon the Pyramids;
O'er England's abbeyes bends the sky,
As on its friends, with kindred eye;
For out of Thought's interior sphere,
These wonders rose to upper air;
And Nature gladly gave them place,
Adopted them into her race,
And granted them an equal date
With Andes and with Ararat.

These temples grew as grows the grass;
Art might obey, but not surpass.
The passive Master lent his hand
To the vast soul that o'er him planned;
And the same power that reared the shrine,
Bestrode the tribes that knelt within.
Ever the fiery Pentecost
Girds with one flame the countless host,
Trances the heart through chanting choirs,
And through the priest the mind inspires.

The word unto the prophet spoken
Was writ on tables yet unbroken;
The word by seers or sibyls told,
In groves of oak, or fanes of gold,
Still floats upon the morning wind,
Still whispers of the willing mind.
One accent of the Holy Ghost
The heedless world hath never lost.
I know what say the fathers wise,—
The Book itself before me lies,

Old Chrysostom, best Augustine,
And he who blent both in his line,
The younger Golden Lips or mines,
Taylor, the Shakespeare of divines.
His words are music in my ear,
I see his cowed portrait dear ;
And yet, for all his faith could see,
I would not the good bishop be.

Emerson's love for country life is finely voiced in the poem "Good-by !" One can imagine the mood with which he would return to Concord to walk its green secluded groves, a peripatetic poet-philosopher.

GOOD-BY !

Good-by, proud world ! I'm going home :
Thou art not my friend, and I'm not thine,
Long through thy weary crowds I roam ;
A river ark on the ocean brine,
Long I've been tossed like the driven foam :
But now, proud world ! I'm going home.

Good-by to Flattery's fawning face ;
To Grandeur with his wise grimace ;
To upstart Wealth's averted eye ;
To supple Office, low and high ;
To crowded halls, to court and street ;
To frozen hearts and hasting feet ;
To those who go, and those who come ;
Good-by, proud world ! I'm going home.

I am going to my own hearthstone,
Bosomed in yon green hills alone, —
A secret nook in a pleasant land,
Whose groves the frolic fairies planned ;
Where arches green, the livelong day,
Echo the blackbird's roundelay,

And vulgar feet have never trod
A spot that is sacred to thought and God.

O, when I am safe in my sylvan home,
I tread on the pride of Greece and Rome;
And when I am stretched beneath the pines,
Where the evening star so holy shines,
I laugh at the lore and the pride of man,
At the sophist schools, and the learned clan;
For what are they all, in their high conceit,
When man in the bush with God may meet?

Again and again, in his verse, either incidental to the main theme, or as a subject for itself, Emerson painted the beauty of natural things—flowers, bees, birds and trees—and surcharged them with the spiritual significance he found everywhere. This side of his poetic genius is as attractive as any aspect of his verse, and several poems may be given to illustrate it. "The Rhodora" is full of a quaint, touching simplicity and a kind of childlike trust:—

THE RHODORA:

ON BEING ASKED, WHENCE IS THE FLOWER?

In May, when sea winds pierced our solitudes,
I found the fresh Rhodora in the woods,
Spreading its leafless blooms in a damp nook,
To please the desert and the sluggish brook.
The purple petals, fallen in the pool,
Made the black water with their beauty gay;
Here might the redbird come his plumes to cool,
And court the flower that cheapens his array.
Rhodora! if the sages ask thee why
This charm is wasted on the earth and sky,
Tell them, dear, that if eyes were made for seeing,
Then Beauty is its own excuse for being:

Why thou wert there, O rival of the rose !
I never thought to ask, I never knew ;
But, in my simple ignorance, suppose
The self-same Power that brought me there brought you.

The longer "Humblebee," if of lighter tone and intent, and lacking the ethical application common to our poet, is full of charm, and of nature lore, and with its touch of pathos at the end is certainly one of the most perfect things Emerson ever did, and may be read in this connection.

Nor can the splendid winter picture, "The Snowstorm," be omitted, a poem almost as well known as Whittier's "Snow-Bound," and as successful in securing an atmosphere which has made that masterpiece and Burns's "The Cotter's Saturday Night" of universal popularity :—

THE SNOWSTORM

Announced by all the trumpets of the sky,
Arrives the snow, and driving o'er the fields,
Seems nowhere to alight : the whited air
Hides hills and woods, the river, and the heavens,
And veils the farmhouse at the garden's end.
The sled and traveler stopped, the courier's feet
Delayed, all friends shut out, the housemates sit
Around the radiant fireplace, inclosed
In a tumultuous privacy of storm.

Come see the north wind's masonry.
Out of an unseen quarry evermore
Furnished with tile, the fierce artificer
Curves his white bastions with projected roof
Round every windward stake, or tree, or door
Speeding, the myriad-handed, his wild work
So fanciful, so savage, nought cares he
For number or proportion. Mockingly,
On coop or kennel he hangs Parian wreaths ;

A swanlike form invests the hidden thorn ;
Fills up the farmer's lane from wall to wall,
Maugre the farmer's sighs ; and, at the gate,
A tapering turret overtops the work.
And when his hours are numbered, and the world
Is all his own, retiring, as he were not,
Leaves, when the sun appears, astonished Art
To mimic in slow structures, stone by stone,
Built in an age, the mad wind's nightwork,
The frolic architecture of the snow.

No student of the poet should omit to read and re-read the "Wood Notes" and "Monadnoc," among the nature pieces, both too long to quote here, but filled with noble passages, and very typical in thought. "Forbearance" is so brief that it can be given : —

FORBEARANCE

Hast thou named all the birds without a gun?
Loved the wood rose, and left it on its stalk?
At rich men's tables eaten bread and pulse?
Unarmed, faced danger with a heart of trust?
And loved so well a high behavior,
In man or maid, that thou from speech refrained,
Nobility more nobly to repay?
O, be my friend, and teach me to be thine !

Also I must give the very noble "Two Rivers," in which the local Concord color adds to its attraction : —

TWO RIVERS

Thy summer voice, Musketaquit,
Repeats the music of the rain ;
But sweeter rivers pulsing flit
Through thee, as through Concord Plain.

Thou in thy narrow banks art pent :
The stream I love unbounded goes
Through flood and sea and firmament ;
Through light, through life, it forward flows.

I see the inundation sweet,
I hear the spending of the stream
Through years, through men, through nature fleet,
Through love and thought, through power and dream.

Musketaquit, a goblin strong,
Of shard and flint makes jewels gay :
They love their grief who hear his song,
And where he winds is the day of day.

So forth and brighter fares my stream, —
Who drink it shall not thirst again ;
No darkness stains its equal gleam,
And ages drop in it like rain.

Again, the familiar "Days" is a good example of the poem whose merit is suggestion, and the manner in which it stimulates thought, without the reader being over sure, it may be, what is the poet's meaning : —

DAYS

Daughters of Time, the hypocritic Days,
Muffled and dumb like barefoot dervishes,
And marching single in an endless file,
Bring diadems and fagots in their hands.
To each they offer gifts after his will,
Bread, kingdom, stars, and sky that holds them all.
I, in my pleached garden, watched the pomp,
Forgot my morning wishes, hastily
Took a few herbs and apples, and the Day
Turned and departed silent. I, too late,
Under her solemn fillet saw the scorn.

How full of suggestion, too, as well as beauty, is the brief poem called "The Test":—

THE TEST

(Musa loquitur)

I hung my verses in the wind,
Time and tide their faults may find.
All were winnowed through and through,
Five lines lasted sound and true ;
Five were smelted in a pot
Than the South more fierce and hot :
These the siroc could not melt,
Fire their fiercer flaming felt,
And the meaning was more white
Than July's meridian light.
Sunshine cannot bleach the snow,
Nor time unmake what poets know.
Have you eyes to find the five
Which five hundred did survive ?

Of all Emerson's larger and more philosophical poems, none is so full of a deep tenderness, together with an admirable bowing of the heart to the course of nature, in faith, as "The Threnody," written after the death of his favorite son. It deals with great simplicity, yet with the profoundest thought and superb elevation of utterance, with an elemental human sorrow, and its spirit cannot fail to go home to the hearts of thousands of readers. It reveals a religious nature passing through the fiery furnace of affliction and coming forth purified and at peace. Every earnest student of the poet should make it his own.

Such poems as these, and others like them which the reader, once indoctrinated with the peculiar charm of Emerson, will readily find for himself, represent the work

which allows the name of maker and seer to be duly awarded to him. They constitute but a small portion of his whole poetic writings. He has a less happy side. Long pieces like "Initial, Dæmonic and Celestial Love" — to name but one — are often involved, harsh, and fragmentary in effect; they lack form and music and felicity of phrase, and if they do not lack meaning, at least it is sometimes hard to find. It is as foolish to laud such poems as successes as it is to treat Browning's "Sordello" as if it were on a level with the dramatic monologues. But, let me say it once more here, a poet is to be judged by quality, not quantity, by his best, not his worst. And in quality and at his best, Ralph Waldo Emerson is one of the high peers of American poetry, the singer-sage whose voice ever calls men to beauty, to duty, and to God.

While the memorials of Emerson's anniversary were being held in the beautiful May month of which he himself chanted, the spectacle was an enheartening one to the lover of native literature and of his native land. It told how in a day when Capital talks the loudest, and Trusts do multiply, America will not willingly remove from their pedestals the men of thought and character and prophetic voice. Among such Emerson must forever stand, a central figure of calm benignity, of beneficent influence, of unassailable elevation.

CHAPTER VII

BRYANT

THE poetry of William Cullen Bryant is of importance in the history of American song, for its lucidity, purity, and high moral tone. It has something of the coldness as well as of the clearness of the mountain stream. There is an almost austere nobility in Bryant's genius, which, together with his gift for imaginative interpretation of nature, as it was revealed to him in his native New England, gives him a distinction seldom attained. His art lacks the magic of Poe but it is simpler and saner. He does not, as a rule, grow fervid over a cause, like Whittier or Lowell. He has not the ease, lightness, and depth of Holmes, nor the wide range and genial culture of Longfellow. Yet, in its way, his comparatively slender rill of verse is as greatly prized as is the fuller stream of almost any of our native singers. When he is not observing the beautiful growths of nature upon the level earth, he seems to dwell upon a peak and to be in communion with the high things that there abide. The accomplishment of this New England writer, therefore, is one of the most impressive contributions to American literature, and he is surely one of the seven great poets of our earlier period who constitute a sort of heptarchy of poetry.

Bryant, although he lived half a century in New York City, and is commonly grouped with the Knickerbocker

writers, was in cast of mind and quality of work essentially of the New England which gave him birth. Up to thirty years of age he lived in Massachusetts, and he came of old Massachusetts stock, the original ancestor settling there in 1632; on his mother's side he is derived from John Alden. One of the interesting offshoots in the story of American literature concerns the way in which the men of New England have come down into New York City to settle there and, by the creative work they did, to add to its fair fame.

It was in the little village of Cummington, which lies among the Hampshire hills of Massachusetts, surrounded by the lovely scenery for which that part of the state is widely known, that Bryant was born in 1794, five years after Cooper. His breeding was that of a country boy. He had the open fields, rivers, and hills to look upon and learn to love, and he early drank in the beauty of his environment, to give it forth later in terms of song. His home was one of those common to New England life in the earlier days, — plain, comfortable, and full of a genuine good breeding, the charm of a true gentility. His father was a respected physician who served his state in the legislature, and whose library was well stocked with the standard books, — he was even known to drop into poetry himself upon occasion. The mother was one of those model housewives equally at home in kitchen or fore-room, and of an influence upon her son potent for all purposes of education in the deeper meaning of that sorely strained word. She helped him in his letters and made him ready for the district school. He was a precocious lad who could read at an astonishingly early age, and wrote verse at nine. He browsed steadily among his father's books

but kept a healthy appetite for outdoor sports and occupations, and was familiar with the old-time country work and play, to be found in haying-squads, husking-bees, and house-raising. Nothing is pleasanter in the study of American literature than to call up a picture of the country homes of such literary leaders as Whittier and Bryant, with all they mean for wholesome breeding, influences at once homely and high and natural arenas for the development of sturdy homespun character.

Bryant, be it understood, was a lad of healthy, natural tastes. He liked to fish and hunt, and knew the mysteries of maple sirup making in the spring and cider making in the autumn. It is a pity that these typical, homely experiences of his youth so rarely got into his verse. His first literary efforts were far from realistic, and he did not, as did Whittier, in after years, look back upon his boyhood and write another "Barefoot Boy" or "Snow-Bound." In 1808, when he was thirteen, there was published in Boston a satiric poem called "The Embargo," in which Bryant attacked the Jefferson administration for closing our ports to foreign commerce. Of course, the theme, to say nothing of the age of the bard, precluded the poem from being real poetry, and the piece is merely a curiosity, interesting because it testifies to Bryant's early instinct for verse and to the didactic nature of his message. After the home instruction, he was tutored in the classics by neighboring clergymen, and in 1810-1811 passed part of the year as a sophomore at Williams College; the simplicity of the conditions of living at that time may be understood from the statement that, while he was thus being prepared for college, he paid the dominie who taught him one dollar a week for his board and instruction. Yet the

future translator of Homer got a solid grounding in Greek from the country parson. Bryant's father did not feel able to carry him through college, so the boy took to law (another example of the premature choice of law instead of literature) and wrestled with legal lore at Bridgewater and Worthington, neighboring towns. But his heart was elsewhere, and hardly had his law studies begun, when — on a solitary stroll among his native hills in the autumn — the idea for the poem "Thanatopsis" came to him and it was written in 1811, before he was seventeen. It was an extraordinary performance, a remarkable poem for any one to write, but close to a miracle as coming from a country lad untrained in literary technique and, presumably, immature of mind. Yet, read to-day, when it takes its place in our literature as one of the permanent efforts, it is seen to possess a maturity, a perfection of form as well as of thought and expression, such as Bryant in his long career has hardly excelled. Precedents are upset by such a phenomenon. At the time, Bryant had been reading Kirke White's somber (not to say lugubrious) poem called "The Grave," and no doubt his Vision of Death (the meaning of the Greek title "Thanatopsis") shows this influence; but only in the sense in which a poem of the first rank can be affected by one upon a hopelessly inferior plane. The real inspiration of the piece came from within himself as he looked out upon the beauty of nature and felt the force of its spiritual meaning.

The young man tucked his poem away in his desk, where the father found it, and, by his encouragement, induced the son to send it, without the fine opening lines and the still finer closing passage, to the *North American Review* of Boston, where the editors, headed by R. H.

Dana, were skeptical of its being written by an American, attributing it to some one of the well-known British poets. When Dana read it he said to a fellow-editor: "Phillips, you have been imposed upon; no one on this side of the Atlantic is capable of writing such verses." It is amusing to know that they accepted the poem only upon the misunderstanding that it was by Dr. Bryant, the poet's father. Had they been told its author was a country lad of seventeen, no doubt they would have flatly refused to be parties to such a violation of all proper magazine tradition. In its final improved form the poem here follows. It should be noted that blank verse, in which "Thanatopsis" is written, is the most difficult of all verse forms for the beginner, and, as a rule, only mastered if at all in full maturity.

THANATOPSIS

To him who in the love of Nature holds
Communion with her visible forms, she speaks
A various language; for his gayer hours
She has a voice of gladness, and a smile
And eloquence of beauty, and she glides
Into his darker musings, with a mild
And healing sympathy, that steals away
Their sharpness, ere he is aware. When thoughts
Of the last bitter hour come like a blight
Over thy spirit, and sad images
Of the stern agony, and shroud, and pall,
And breathless darkness, and the narrow house
Make thee to shudder, and grow sick at heart; —
Go forth, under the open sky, and list
To Nature's teachings, while from all around —
Earth and her waters, and the depths of air, —
Comes a still voice — Yet a few days, and thee

The all-beholding sun shall see no more
In all his course ; nor yet in the cold ground,
Where thy pale form was laid, with many tears,
Nor in the embrace of ocean, shall exist
Thy image. Earth, that nourished thee, shall claim
Thy growth, to be resolved to earth again,
And, lost each human trace, surrendering up
Thine individual being, shalt thou go
To mix forever with the elements,
To be a brother to the insensible rock
And to the sluggish clod, which the rude swain
Turns with his share, and treads upon. The oak
Shall send his roots abroad, and pierce thy mold.

Yet not to thine eternal resting-place
Shalt thou retire alone, nor couldst thou wish
Couch more magnificent. Thou shalt lie down
With patriarchs of the infant world — with kings,
The powerful of the earth — the wise, the good,
Fair forms, and hoary seers of ages past,
All in one mighty sepulcher. The hills,
Rock-ribbed and ancient as the sun, — the vales
Stretching in pensive quietness between ;
The venerable woods — rivers that move
In majesty, and the complaining brooks
That make the meadows green ; and, poured round all,
Old ocean's gray and melancholy waste, —
Are but the solemn decorations all
Of the great tomb of man. The golden sun,
The planets, all the infinite host of heaven,
Are shining on the sad abodes of death,
Through the still lapse of ages. All that tread
The globe are but a handful to the tribes
That slumber in its bosom. — Take the wings
Of morning, pierce the Barcan wilderness,
Or lose thyself in the continuous woods
Where rolls the Oregon, and hears no sound,

Save his own dashings — yet — the dead are there :
And millions in those solitudes, since first
The flight of years began, have laid them down
In their last sleep — the dead reign there alone.
So shalt thou rest, and what if thou withdraw
In silence from the living, and no friend
Take note of thy departure ? All that breathe
Will share thy destiny. The gay will laugh
When thou art gone, the solemn brood of care
Plod on, and each one as before will chase
His favorite phantom ; yet all these shall leave
Their mirth and their employments, and shall come
And make their bed with thee. As the long train
Of ages glide away, the sons of men,
The youth in life's green spring, and he who goes
In the full strength of years, matron, and maid,
The speechless babe, and the gray-headed man, —
Shall one by one be gathered to thy side,
By those, who in their turn shall follow them.

So live, that when thy summons comes to join
The innumerable caravan, which moves
To that mysterious realm, where each shall take
His chamber in the silent halls of death,
Thou go not, like the quarry-slave at night,
Scourged to his dungeon, but, sustained and soothed
By an unfaltering trust, approach thy grave,
Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch
About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams.

Meanwhile, Bryant went steadily on with his law studies, for this great first poem of his was not published until 1817 ; and, as might be expected, did not draw general attention to him when it did appear, although a critic here and there recognized its quality. But nature — the poetic nature in this case — cannot be coerced ; and as young

Bryant walked to a neighboring town late one afternoon for the purpose of finding a good place in which to hang out his shingle, he saw a solitary bird winging its way across the sunset sky, silhouetted against the flame of color,—and wrote another classic, “To a Water-fowl,” equally expressive of his genius and saturated with the calm beauty and deep religious feeling of all his work. There is in it a noble melancholy saved from being morbid by the consolation of faith :—

TO A WATER-FOWL

Whither, midst falling dew,
While glow the heavens with the last steps of day,
Far, through their rosy depths, dost thou pursue
Thy solitary way ?

Vainly the fowler's eye
Might mark thy distant flight to do thee wrong,
As, darkly seen against the crimson sky,
Thy figure floats along.

Seek'st thou the plashy brink
Of weedy lake, or marge of river wide,
Or where the rocking billows rise and sink
On the chafed ocean side ?

There is a Power whose care
Teaches thy way along that pathless coast,—
The desert and illimitable air,—
Lone wandering, but not lost.

All day thy wings have fanned,
At that far height, the cold, thin atmosphere,
Yet, stoop not, weary, to the welcome land,
Though the dark night is near.

And soon that toil shall end ;
Soon shalt thou find a summer home, and rest,
And scream among thy fellows ; reeds shall bend,
Soon, o'er thy sheltered nest.

Thou'rt gone, the abyss of heaven
Hath swallowed up thy form ; yet, on my heart
Deeply hath sunk the lesson thou hast given,
And shall not soon depart.

He who, from zone to zone,
Guides through the boundless sky thy certain flight,
In the long way that I must tread alone,
Will lead my steps aright.

Bryant married Frances Fairchild while still very young, and, after a year of law practice at Plainfield, and nine years more of it at Great Barrington,—quite enough to show him that he did not like the profession,—he went in 1825 to New York City, ambitious of a wider field and a change of work. He was then a little over thirty, and he solved the practical problem of livelihood by adopting newspaper work as a profession, one, by the way, that has been a good staff for many of our American makers of literature. He had some hard sledding at the outset, but several experiments on other papers led up to an associate editorship of the *Evening Post* in 1826 ; and three years later he became editor-in-chief, and acquired an interest in the paper. For almost half a century he held this conspicuous post in American journalism and brought the paper into a position of influence for its honesty, ability, and high, clean methods, which still gives it a unique place among American newspapers,—an influence the traditions of which have been

carried on, with some personal variations, by the late E. L. Godkin, whose recent death removed one of the aggressively striking figures of the newspaper world.

Bryant's personal effect—and the more impersonal effect of his journal—was an incalculable service in elevating the general tone of our newspapers; and he is an illustration of the fact that even in the much-maligned newspaper, the mind behind the editorial can be a force which, if directed to high aims, and controlled by high ideals, makes the newspaper one of the worthy educational forces of the day. So long was Bryant's life that, at one end, it touched the War of 1812—for he was an ardent secessionist in those days, joining the militia for the defense of the state against the demands of an unreasonable government—and the administration of Hayes at the other. His metropolitan residence, with its steadily growing success and beneficent influence, was varied by half a dozen or more trips to Europe and the Orient, to Cuba, Mexico, and the West Indies, and these opportunities for culture broadened him as a man and added to his capacity as an interpreter of affairs. Before his death he had come to be regarded as the leading figure in journalism and in many ways New York's first citizen. In 1843 he bought his suburban estate near Roslyn, Long Island, where he made his home and was buried; he also acquired in 1865, the year he lost his wife, the family homestead at Cummington, to which town he gave a public library in 1872, half a dozen years before his death. Coming of a sturdy stock, and having through his life the most careful habits of regimen and regularity in his daily walks and ways, Bryant not only lived to an extreme old age but retained his faculties, mental and physical, marvelously to

his last, making in his personal appearance a splendidly patriarchal effect. He is described by Parke Godwin, his son-in-law and biographer, as of "medium height, spare in figure, with a clean-shaven face, unusually large head, bright eyes, and a wearied, severe, almost saturnine expression of countenance. One, however, remarked at once the exceeding gentleness of his manner, and a rare sweetness in the tone of his voice, as well as an extraordinary purity in his selection and pronunciation of English." How such a man kept his health and strength in so remarkable a degree when he was nearer eighty than seventy, still active at his office, and engaged at home in his Greek translation, is perhaps largely explained by the fact that he exercised an hour before breakfast with dumbbells and other gymnastic appliances, avoided animal food except at dinner, and then using mostly vegetables; and that he walked three miles each day to and from the office of the *Evening Post*, spending but three hours at his newspaper work. He never touched tea or coffee and rarely a glass of wine. During his old age he solaced himself at home with practical studies, translating the "Iliad" and "Odyssey" into blank verse, which, for accuracy and nobility, still ranks well among the many Homeric versions. These he completed when he was seventy-seven.

Bryant's death in his eighty-fourth year was the result of an accident, and he was still wonderfully vigorous for that age. In the spring of 1878 he addressed an audience in Central Park on the occasion of the raising of a statue to the Italian, Mazzini. It was a warm day, and, with his hat off, he was exposed to the rays of the sun. Afterwards, as he ascended the stone steps of the house of General Wilson, he fell, struck his head on the stones,

and concussion of the brain followed. He died after lying two weeks in a comatose condition.

The character of Bryant, as it is shown by many memoirs and witnesses, was high, pure, and admirable, rather than of the sort which awakens fervid love. No man was more respected and revered; but Hawthorne and many others found him cold. He had the New England reserve, he did not make a magnetic impression, did not enter into impulsive, warm-hearted contact with his fellow-men. It is said that in his home life the real warmth of his nature was revealed, the volcano beneath the snow. It may be that to call him cold, meaning thereby that he lacked human sympathy, is misleading, even unjust. But many anecdotes are afloat to indicate that Bryant did possess a certain temperamental coldness, a quality of reserve. He was frugal, careful, cautious; good traits all, but not such as to fire the onlooker to enthusiastic praise. And his song reflects this nature, both in its limitations and its excellences.

Bryant published many books during his long career, and a number of them were prose, travel articles, and occasional addresses, admirable for their purpose. His prose was excellent and, as we have seen, he did much to elevate editorial style and exercised a wholesomely conservative effect upon the English idiom of to-day. But this side of his activity counts for nothing in the study of him as a leader in American literature. His fame rests entirely upon his poetry. He printed numerous volumes of verse, from the "Poems" of 1821 to a volume in 1863, in which appears "The Planting of the Apple Tree." It was his way in each successive book to add a number of new pieces, retaining those in the earlier collections. His

total poetic contribution, therefore, was not large in extent; moreover, most of it had been written by 1832, when he was still under forty, although a few favorites — like “Robert of Lincoln,” which was printed in the volume of 1854 — came later. But Bryant is a most remarkable example of a distinctive poet who reached maturity very young, showed his real quality there and then, and made small departures from this announcement of his quality, in spite of the manifold experiences of an unusually long and richly fruitful career. Perhaps it is because his daily work was a practical one, and verse always aside from the main employment. The boy of seventeen who wrote “Thanatopsis,” the young man who composed “To a Water-fowl” before he attained his majority, does not appear to have gained from well-nigh three-quarters of a century of living, a lovelier note of music or a deeper philosophy. He simply added other noble and beautiful things; but growth he hardly displays. In this respect Bryant is one of the anomalies of poetic history. But his case suggests the validity of the poetic gift which transcends rule and reverses theories.

A little consideration of Bryant's poetry makes apparent its deservedly high standing as well as the lack of range and narrowness of appeal which helped to make its influence. A poet who clearly sings one song is more likely to be heard than another who, like a mocking-bird, takes on the voice of many singers, or who, without imitation, yet has the effect of being many rather than one. With such an one, it is harder to define his aim and to feel his unity. Bryant's verse is, for the most part, grave, restrained, unimpassioned, meditative, fraught with reflection; but so high and clear and sweet, that no note in the

American song garden floats to us with a more pellucid charm. In many ways he now seems old-fashioned. His education, in the time in which his formative period fell, led him to use largely the language of the eighteenth-century bards, modifying and purifying it, however, by virtue of his native talent. In the handling of meters in stanzaic forms, too, he preferred the simpler art of the period before the rhythmic and formal intricacies of masters like Poe and Swinburne and Lanier. As to themes, he dwelt reflectively upon nature in relation to man; he brooded upon life and its moral meaning and upon death, its issue, relieved by the spiritual hope that lessens its terror and makes it the threshold of the better life. Thus, a certain brooding melancholy in him, a sweet pensiveness, is tempered by the religious consolation of his song which is also a characteristic of the elder New England poets as a whole, and justifies us in placing Bryant with them (in his spirit, I mean) rather than with the New York Knickerbockers. These poets, and none of them more than Bryant, love what has been irreverently called "the moral tag"; they liked to make a didactic application of a poetic scene or thought, to drive the lesson home. This has an effect of old-fashionedness in our day, when it is more popular to offer something beautiful and let it speak for itself. But, questionless, the major American poets have secured their permanent place and are beloved by the people, partly because of this same moral message of theirs.

No side of Bryant's song is more appreciated than his nature pieces. We have already listened to one, — "The Water-fowl." Here is another favorite, representative both for its tenderness, the observing eye of the lover of

flower and bird, and shifting season, and, too, for the inevitable application at the end to the human case, generally the poet's own.

TO THE FRINGED GENTIAN

Thou blossom bright with autumn dew,
And colored with the heaven's own blue,
That openest when the quiet light
Succeeds the keen and frosty night.

Thou comest not when violets lean
O'er wandering brooks and springs unseen,
Or columbines, in purple dressed,
Nod o'er the ground-bird's hidden nest.

Thou waitest late and com'st alone,
When woods are bare and birds are flown,
And frosts and shortening days portend
The aged year is near his end.

Then doth thy sweet and quiet eye
Look through its fringes to the sky,
Blue — blue — as if that sky let fall
A flower from its cerulean wall.

I would that thus, when I shall see
The hour of death draw near to me,
Hope, blossoming within my heart,
May look to heaven as I depart.

An elegiac quality is pronounced in the familiar "Death of the Flowers," simple almost to bareness, but truly charming in the limning of nature in the first four stanzas. Bryant wrote numerous sonorous poems in blank verse, and, as we have seen, had a special aptitude for that large-moving, grave, majestic form. Along with the

"Thanatopsis," a "Forest Hymn" may be read in further illustration of this phase of his work; it contains lines often to be met with in quotation. "The Flood of Years" also belongs to this class and is one of the most admired of his longer pieces. They display Bryant's tendency to large, grandiose effects, treating them with a kind of Olympian sweep which is in consonance with the mighty things he hymns. Yet his triumphs, on the whole, are to be found in the simpler and shorter lyrics. He is essentially a reflective lyric poet; his was not the dramatic power of scene-painting and situation nor the constructive gift for narrative. Very early he found his *métier* and wisely he kept to it. Love — the more passionate love between the sexes — does not enter his song to give it a warmer color, a vernal glamour and thrill.

When, as occasionally happens, he essays the patriotic, he produces in a poem like "America," something that is adequate and dignified but not compelling. The leap and fervor which Whittier or Lowell would have given us are absent. "The Battlefield" is far finer (the ninth stanza, often reproduced, is notable) and may be read as a favorable example of this mood of his Muse.

It will be well, perhaps, in leaving Bryant, to have lingering in our ears for musical and happy memory, such a lyric as "Robert of Lincoln": —

ROBERT OF LINCOLN

Merrily swinging on brier and weed,
Near to the nest of his little dame,
Over the mountain-side or mead,
Robert of Lincoln is telling his name:
Bob-o'-link, bob-o'-link,
Spink, spank, spink;

Snug and safe is that nest of ours,
Hidden among the summer flowers.
Chee, chee, chee.

Robert of Lincoln is gayly drest,
Wearing a bright black wedding coat ;
White are his shoulders and white his crest,
Hear him call in his merry note :
Bob-o'-link, bob-o'-link,
Spink, spank, spink ;
Look, what a nice new coat is mine,
Sure there was never a bird so fine.
Chee, chee, chee.

Robert of Lincoln's Quaker wife,
Pretty and quiet, with plain brown wings,
Passing at home a patient life,
Broods in the grass while her husband sings :
Bob-o'-link, bob-o'-link,
Spink, spank, spink ;
Brood, kind creature ; you need not fear
Thieves and robbers while I am here.
Chee, chee, chee.

Modest and shy as a nun is she ;
One weak chirp is her only note.
Braggart and prince of braggarts is he,
Pouring boasts from his little throat :
Bob-o'-link, bob-o'-link,
Spink, spank, spink ;
Never was I afraid of man ;
Catch me, cowardly knaves, if you can.
Chee, chee, chee.

Six white eggs on a bed of hay,
Flecked with purple, a pretty sight !

There as the mother sits all day,
Robert is singing with all his might :
 Bob-o'-link, bob-o'-link,
 Spink, spank, spink ;
Nice good wife, that never goes out,
Keeping house while I frolic about.
 Chee, chee, chee.

Soon as the little ones chip the shell
Six wide mouths are open for food.
Robert of Lincoln bestirs him well.
 Gathering seeds for the hungry brood.
 Bob-o'-link, bob-o'-link,
 Spink, spank, spink ;
This new life is likely to be
Hard for a gay young fellow like me.
 Chee, chee, chee.

Robert of Lincoln at length is made
Sober with work, and silent with care ;
Off is his holiday garment laid,
Half forgotten that merry air,
 Bob-o'-link, bob-o'-link,
 Spink, spank, spink ;
Nobody knows but my mate and I
Where our nest and our nestlings lie.
 Chee, chee, chee.

Summer wanes ; the children are grown ;
Fun and frolic no more he knows ;
Robert of Lincoln's a humdrum crone ;
Off he flies, and we sing as he goes :
 Bob-o'-link, bob-o'-link,
 Spink, spank, spink ;
When you can pipe that merry old strain,
Robert of Lincoln, come back again.
 Chee, chee, chee.

William Cullen Bryant is justly called the Patriarch of American Poetry. He is in time the first of our major poets. His "Thanatopsis," written when Poe was an infant, was the first fruit of the rich harvesting of the nineteenth century. In quality and kind he is the American Wordsworth, though by no means the peer of the great English singer of nature. He sits apart, and, with a voice serene, calm, high, and of a silvery sweetness, still calls upon all Americans who are sensitive to the spiritual meaning in the external universe and who are willing to listen to wise meditations upon life and death and the Great Beyond. He is a poet more likely to please, to console, and to uplift the mature who have lived and suffered and gained depth through living, than the young who are carried away by passion and leaping music and the stormy felicities of new life. To be thus a consoler of the later years is a mission, and worthily does Bryant fulfill it.

CHAPTER VIII

LONGFELLOW

ONE of the distinctions of Longfellow among the American poets is that, while he was a poet of culture — a man of scholarly habits who had widely assimilated continental literature and often drew upon his culture for his themes — yet he was quite as truly a popular poet. His song went home to the general heart, his poems became a household possession.

As more and more of critical attention has been directed to the American singers of an earlier generation, the estimate of Longfellow has come to be somewhat different from that which existed at the time of his death and which encouraged him during his life-work. Transatlantic criticism, where it does not deny to Poe and Emerson and Hawthorne the right to a place with the more permanent literary forces, inclines to relegate Longfellow to a less significant position. He is named as a pleasing poet without real or much originality and distinction. Some critics even go so far as to refer to him half contemptuously as a sort of sounding-board of foreign tones. At home, while his popularity is still firmly fixed, it cannot be denied that the critical regard of him has somewhat altered. I shall wish to show, however, in the following pages that there is ample reason for placing him with the major American poets.

Longfellow was born in 1807, two years before Holmes, but he died more than a decade earlier, and this makes him seem farther back in time as a literary figure. Although so long and intimately associated with Massachusetts, with the social and intellectual life of Cambridge and Boston, he was a Maine boy, whose native place was Portland, where his father was a distinguished lawyer and a trustee of Bowdoin College. The story of the poet's life is not like that of Bryant or Whittier, — the country lad accomplishing great things from humble beginnings. Longfellow's lot, contrariwise, was fair and fortunate throughout his days ; if we except a tragic sorrow in his home — the loss of his second wife by fire. But viewing his life as a whole, externally it was notably unruffled, while within was the calm of a character in which the elements were wisely blended and made but the more symmetrical by the passage of the years.

The New England blood in him was of the best ; his mother was a Wadsworth, and on her side he traced back to John Alden of bashful memory, whom he was to immortalize in one of his poems. From boyhood into manhood and through maturity to a noble old age, we find in Henry Wadsworth Longfellow an essentially sweet, sane, fine nature. Without being a prig or a softling, he was as a child gentler and more sensitive to fine appeals than the average lad ; yet a hearty, handsome fellow, by all accounts, quick tempered but kind and affectionate, "the sunlight of the house."

Portland was a good town to be young and grow up in, with its long sea beach and mysterious merchant ships from afar, that lay at its wharves. Long afterwards, in one of his best poems, "My Lost Youth," he sang : —

I remember the black wharves and the slips
And the sea-tides tossing free ;
And the Spanish sailors with bearded lips
And the beauty and mystery of the ships,
And the magic of the sea.

The young Longfellow was fond of his books, and a rhymster at thirteen, at which formidable age a piece of verse by him appeared in a local paper. Of this, and his early efforts in general, it may be said that they were not remarkable, — which is a comfort rather than otherwise, for a young precocity is of dubious promise for the mature performance. He was educated privately and at Portland Academy, and entered Bowdoin as a sophomore, to find one classmate, Nathaniel Hawthorne, who like himself was to become famous in literature. Very wisely, as it turned out, Longfellow while he was an undergraduate wrote prose and verse steadily, contributing to such magazines as would take his literary efforts ; and thus made progress in forming his style and learning what his bent really was. He was all for literature in these early days. He stood well in college, being graduated fourth in a class numbering about forty. A sign of the good impression he had made came when, at the end of his course, the Bowdoin trustees proposed that he should go abroad to fit himself to take the new chair of modern languages. The suggestion was entirely congenial to his tastes. There had been some talk of the law for him, which was naturally his father's notion. The senior Longfellow had the practical man's usual attitude toward letters : " A literary life, to one who has the means of support," he wrote to his son, " must be very pleasant, but there is not enough wealth in this country to afford encouragement and patron-

age to merely literary men." There is, perhaps, a touch of the patronizing in this, but its sound common sense is undeniable. Certainly, to Longfellow, the would-be poet, in the summer following his graduation, the outlook for the aspirant was not brilliant. Bryant was publishing his early poems, but otherwise the song garden seemed voiceless; but in this offer of a college position was work in the line of his ability and liking; so the next three years were spent in England and on the continent in fruitful and delightful study and sight-seeing. The young Bowdoin man was peculiarly responsive to the old-world effect,—its legends and folklore, its time-soaked associations and traditions, its storied treasures of art, and brilliant panorama of nature. What he absorbed during this formative period (Longfellow was but nineteen when he sailed) was potent in coloring his whole after-life as an author. His first creative work, the prose "Outre Mer," a delightful travel sketch in the tradition and under the influence of Irving, testifies in name and quality to this rich experience over-seas.

A young man, then, of only twenty-two, he returned in 1829 to begin his teaching at Bowdoin; and until he was not far from fifty, Longfellow was a teacher, a college professor at Bowdoin and Harvard—popular and most effective in his work. It is well known that he finally abandoned it because he felt it hampered his literary work, even choked his poetry. Shortly before resigning his Harvard chair, he wrote: "This college work is like a great hand laid on all the strings of my lyre, stopping their vibration." We shall find Lowell making similar complaint about his college lectures. Yet it would not be quite fair, perhaps, to Longfellow's college work to over-

look the fact that these words may have been the expression of a mood, and that much in the vocation of teacher appealed to him and was heartily enjoyed. His was a nature sympathetic and kindly; he loved languages and literature, and could not fail to get pleasure from their impartation. Those who were his students, testify to the exquisite courtliness and courtesy of his manner in the classroom.

The Bowdoin professorship was held six years, and then came, in 1835, another year abroad, spent in Denmark, Sweden, Holland, and other lands. His young wife (he had married Mary S. Potter, in 1831) died in Rotterdam, — Longfellow's first great sorrow; and it is not fanciful to see in his poetry, after this loss, a deeper note of human sympathy. During the Bowdoin years his scholarly book work had begun, for in 1833 he published a Spanish translation, while on the side of verse, his maiden volume of poems had appeared in the year of his departure for the European study. Upon the second return from Europe, Longfellow took the chair of Romance languages at Harvard, of which the earlier occupant had been Ticknor, the historian, and became one of the notable figures in scholastic circles as well as conspicuous socially in a Boston and Cambridge group, made of such men of mark as Professor Norton, Sumner, Hawthorne, the historians Ticknor and Prescott, Lowell, Agassiz, and Holmes, — indeed, by the testimony of Colonel Higginson, in some sort its center. Longfellow had great social aptitudes; his wholesome, attractive personality and essential kindliness of nature, as well as his accomplishments, made him widely welcome. In these earlier days, his face was one of strength and character, rather than beauty; but as he

advanced in age, Longfellow mellowed and softened, and was, in his last years, with his crown of white hair, a very handsome and stately old man.

At Cambridge, Longfellow had rooms in Craigie House on the beautiful Brattle Street. Washington had used this building for his headquarters when, in 1775, he took charge of the American troops. Later in the poet's life the historic house came into his possession through its purchase by the father of his second wife, Frances Appleton, whom he married in 1843; and the stately colonial home can still be visited, for, by the courtesy of the poet's daughter, Miss Alice Longfellow, on certain days several of the rooms, preserved much as Longfellow left them, are shown to those who apply for admission.

The tranquil flow of these Cambridge days was violently interrupted by a domestic tragedy, — Longfellow's loss of his second wife by fire. While she was seated in the next room to him, her clothing became ignited from a lamp, and before the husband could rescue her, she was burned so severely as to die the following day. This was in 1861, so that the poet passed the remaining twenty years of his life without the dear house-mate; consoled, however, by his sons and daughters, his children numbering six, — four of them girls, of whom one was early taken. All the world remembers the description of

Grave Alice and laughing Allegra
And Edith with golden hair.

Gradually peace came, and many good books were given to the world after this sorrow, beginning with the "Tales of a Wayside Inn," — one of his deserved successes in narrative verse.

There was another European trip in 1868-1869, and then for the remainder of his days, Longfellow led a quietly contented and charming home life at Craigie House, busy with his writings, enlivened by a social circle which was as choice as could be found anywhere in the world, beloved and honored at home and abroad as few men have ever been, and by the time of his death, after a brief illness in 1882, holding a place in the popular regard such as at the moment no other American poet could pretend to approach. Only a few days before, he had, after his kindly fashion, entertained a little party of Boston school-boys at his home; his hold on the children has always been remarkable, and it is pleasant to remember that so near to his end the close relation was symbolized by this incident. Two years before he died, Longfellow Day was established in the Cincinnati public schools, and the movement has since spread fast and far throughout the land. Such action speaks volumes for the really vital influence of this singer upon his day and his country. His work was but the reflection of a truly good life. There was a double fitness in the epithet, "the white Mr. Longfellow," applied to him by the great Norwegian poet-statesman, Björnson; for that life was, indeed, stainless, pure, and high.

As Longfellow brought out book after book during his long career (and no attempt will here be made to catalogue the writings of so voluminous a man, whose books number some thirty) his reputation grew slowly but steadily; his approach to fame was not, like Byron's, at a bound, but normal and sure. So late as 1840, when he was thirty-five and had published the prose "Hyperion" and the book of verse "Voices of the Night," as well as several other

volumes, the income from his writings was only \$214; but by 1846 it had increased to \$1800, and thereafter the gain was constant. By the time he was fifty, his various works were selling handsomely, the poetry, led, it is interesting to note, by "Hiawatha," of which fifty thousand had been disposed of, out-selling his prose romances by three or four to one. Just as Emerson's natural medium of expression was prose, so was verse that of Longfellow. His European sketches and romances in prose, "Outre Mer," "Hyperion," and his New England story, "Kavanagh," are interesting for beauty of style, purity and warmth of sentiment, and, in the case of the earlier two, for a certain young-man poetry. "Hyperion" has an interest not possessed by the others for its autobiographical flavor, since it is known to be a veiled history of the poet's own experiences; and it did a service in opening up to American readers the riches of German romance, — of song, story, scenery, and life, — all set forth with a fervor at times a little too sentimental for taste to-day. "Hyperion" is a storm and stress document, Longfellow's depiction of the day when he sought the blue flower and found his love. The translations in the book were a foretaste of the many admirable versions of the best poetry in whatever tongue, which, throughout his literary career, Longfellow was to give the world, — thereby again doing great service in the popularizing and domesticating of foreign masters.

But the poetry must receive main attention. Longfellow wrote much verse and in many forms; his field was a wide one and the growths therein were so various as to seem to embrace every kind of poetic flower. A thoughtful survey of the large body of his works, however, will show that he

was primarily a lyric poet; a singer of songs, an interpreter of the elemental emotions of common humanity, a bard who looked into his own heart and found there the inspiration to speak for others. His charming little poem "The Arrow and the Song" conveys this idea:—

THE ARROW AND THE SONG

I shot an arrow into the air,
It fell to earth, I knew not where;
For, so swiftly it flew, the sight
Could not follow it in its flight.

I breathed a song into the air,
It fell to earth, I knew not where;
For who has sight so keen and strong,
That it can follow the flight of song?

Long, long afterward, in an oak
I found the arrow, still unbroke;
And the song, from beginning to end,
I found again in the heart of a friend.

The song reached the friend's heart because it came from Longfellow's own; and the heart of a fellow human being is a target at which the true poet ever aims. Longfellow never forgot this. A lyric poet is one who is musical, who is charged with personal emotion and with a message of love—love human and love spiritual—and so reveals himself, instead of hiding behind characters and objective events as does the dramatic or epic poet. But in calling Longfellow thus a lyric poet, I only mean that a large part of his best and most typical work was lyric; the word is used broadly to include a deal of fine narrative verse, rising at times to the epic quality of "Evangeline" or

"Hiawatha," and hence not subjective like "The Psalm of Life" or "The Children's Hour."

For Longfellow was certainly a most effective and admirable narrative poet. He could take a romantic story, like that of "Evangeline," or a picturesque historic episode, such as is handled in "The Courtship of Miles Standish," and tell it with a clear charm and a human touch that made it instantly liked: and he could always turn off a capital ballad,—witness "The Skeleton in Armour," "The Wreck of the Hesperus," and a score more. We are told that five thousand copies of "Miles Standish" were sold by noon of the first day of its publication; in London ten thousand,—this last an extraordinary fact, hardly to be paralleled in American literature. Longfellow was unique among our poets in the foreign vogue he won; his work has been more widely copied and translated than that of any other American writer save Mrs. Stowe.

Dramatic in his work he is not. The threefold dramatic poem, "Christus," of which the central part, "The Golden Legend," is the best, mellow and full of artistic quality as it is, cannot be called the masterpiece it would have been, if Longfellow, like Browning in "The Ring and the Book," had found his full powers in such efforts. The charm of "The Spanish Student" is that of lyric color and sound, of song and picture, rather than of dramatic story. But for idyllic narrative and for that of more epic dignity and proportion, he had a genuine gift. Since it is the tendency of latter-day criticism to refer to Longfellow as a writer of sweet, simple songs and little more, I wish to emphasize this side of his power: the talent for sustained narrative verse. The poet who is simply derivative,

an Æolian harp played upon by every wind that blows, does not show himself a pioneer in themes and forms: Longfellow did just this. He had the poetic instinct to take from Nova Scotia the pensively lovely tale of "Evangeline" and make that dim Acadian folk live again with all the pathos of the loved and lost. And he told the story in the melodious hexameter, practically a new meter for such a purpose,—and in so doing constituted himself a bold innovator as to form,—and won a success in it which has never been duplicated. The handling of the hexameter in this poem (and it has been harshly criticised from Poe to Matthew Arnold) is on the whole a triumph; there is no more skillful use of this meter applied to the purpose of real story-telling and not done merely as a scholastic exercise. Goethe, in his "Hermann and Dorothea," an hexameter poem of like idyllic quality, has hardly been more successful. The student is earnestly besought to read "Evangeline" as a whole.

In the same spirit, he turned later to the Indian for inspiration (as had Cooper so long before) and found another fine native theme, throwing the romantic story of another race, once strong and proud and picturesque and now well-nigh gone, into another untried meter, and again with wonderfully happy results. Everybody now knows that the meter of "Hiawatha" is that of the Finnish epic "Kalevala"; that Longfellow revived it. But that does not alter the fact that he was successful in daring to introduce this unrhymed form of verse into a language where rhyme (outside of blank verse) was a hard and fast tradition. It is only justice to Longfellow to say that, looking at him as an artist and a force in native letters, these are major achievements; and their inexpug-

nable popularity ever since they were introduced seems to me to be an evidence of a sound public instinct for what is really representative.

In many another narrative as well, heroic or homely, high in theme or lowly, — “The Tales of a Wayside Inn” afford a notable example, — did Longfellow exhibit this gift of his for story-making. He was eclectic in his subjects, taking them from anywhere and everywhere (as did Shakespeare before him), but the question in such matters is not, Where did you get it? but rather, What have you done with it? In the ballads, where lyric flow and an attractive handling of a simple, often homely measure must combine with a strong human interest in the telling of some story, Longfellow was happy again and again. “The Wreck of the Hesperus” may be read as typical of many in this class.

On that side of lyric poetry which is gently meditative or gravely philosophic and full of spiritual message, Longfellow is also famous. His most-quoted pieces fall here, and poems like “A Psalm of Life” have suffered the penalty attaching always to literature which, because of a familiarity beginning in the schoolroom, comes to be hackneyed and parodied. But after all, such a fate is only granted to what has come to stay; it has been said of great men that after they are caricatured their fame is assured.

In the poems of this kind Longfellow has a tendency which is now regarded as a fault, — a tendency, let me add, shared more or less in common by all the older New England bards. I refer to his didacticism, his desire to preach. In that very charming piece, “The Village Blacksmith,” for example, the last stanza begins: —

Thanks, thanks to thee, my worthy friend,
For the lesson thou hast taught.

And the poet then goes on to tell what the lesson is and to make, a little heavily, the moral application. Few will deny that in poetical quality the poem suffers; the ethical good of it was all received before the moral tag had been added. And along with this moralizing at the end of a poem, goes a prosaic commonplaceness of expression which injures the verse. The invocatory first line just quoted is not the language of poetry at all. In reply to this criticism, it may be said that much of Longfellow's hold on the people comes from this frank use of the hortatory and the moralizing; fifty years ago it was not objected to in poetry as it is to-day. At present the readers of verse prefer to get their obvious instruction from the pulpit, and regard the stimulation of their sense of beauty as the main business of poetry. Yet often Longfellow's verse, when such is his aim, takes on a fine dignity and an increased width and depth by reason of this purpose of his to teach and lead. The question finally resolves itself into this: Is the poet while preaching still the poet, — that is, musical, beautiful in word and form? If so, the more moralism the better. Prosiness, dullness, and lack of beauty are the three cardinal poetic sins: and Longfellow was never guilty of them all. It is unusual with him to be guilty of any of them. His felicity of phrasing is almost constant, and his capacity for music was so well in hand that it rarely forsook him.

Nor should it be forgotten in looking at the many facets of this poet's jewels, as they variously shine before the reader's eye, that luster after luster is the result of the literary culture of the poet; it is this part of his work, to

be sure, which now seems to us less original and hence less important. Yet this stimulus often called out Longfellow's full powers. A poem like "The Belfry of Bruges" may stand for an example of the successful handling of a transatlantic motive. Longfellow was as good a sonneteer as we have produced, and in this Italian form, with its definite demands of rhyme arrangement and rhythm and twofold parts, he wrought some of the loveliest of his fancies; the fine sonnet on Milton is one such, and the really splendid series on the cathedral, that "medieval miracle of stone," furnishes another. The first mentioned may follow:—

MILTON

I pace the sounding sea-beach and behold
How the voluminous billows roll and run,
Upheaving and subsiding, while the sun
Shines through their sheeted emerald far unrolled,
And the ninth wave, slow gathering fold by fold
All its loose-flowing garments into one,
Plunges upon the shore, and floods the dun
Pale reach of sands, and changes them to gold.
So in majestic cadence rise and fall
The mighty undulations of thy song,
O sightless bard, England's Mæonides!
And ever and anon, high over all
Uplifted, a ninth wave superb and strong,
Floods all the soul with its melodious seas.

It is the scholar-poet again who is to be seen in the "Saga of King Olaf" or in the old miracle play of "The Golden Legend"; but in Longfellow's verse, as indeed in the whole demesne of poetry of the English race, the themes which have inspired to creative effort have been

in large measure historical, legendary, and bookish; the democratic Muse of Whitman, with its startling homeliness and modernity of subject, does not exclude the possibility of a more cultured appeal. It is a mark of the versatility of Longfellow that he could with such success write both the simple lays dear to the general public and produce the larger scholar-work for the few; could erect the humble wayside shrine and the stately cathedral with its glories of music, decoration, and soaring architectonics. Naturally enough, in the poetic labor of his latest years, the culture themes became more prominent. The titles of late books, like "The Masque of Pandora" and "Keramos," illustrate the fact.

Closely in connection with this cultured and scholarly aspect of Longfellow's poetry is his work as a translator. All things considered, he did more and better work in making English versions from good foreign literature than any other literary man we have produced. His outgiving here was of remarkable range and variety. When well advanced in years he made an English translation of Dante's "Divine Comedy," in many respects admirable; but from the days of "Outre Mer" and "Hyperion" he was constantly turning song, ballad, and narrative from foreign sources into his own tongue. Some of them, like the vastly popular song "Beware" or the lovely "Song of the Silent Land," both from the German, seem almost as much a part of him and of English literature as his original poems,—which is in itself a tremendous compliment. The service to general culture in America thus performed by Longfellow is not likely to be overestimated; when he began to translate from other languages, the common knowledge of foreign literature which now exists had

hardly begun; viewed thus, his work as a translator, though not so demonstrative of his individual talent, is an important side of the good he did as a literary man. Every literary worker knows the immense and thankless difficulty of producing good translations; nothing is rarer than a really conspicuous talent for it. Such a talent Longfellow certainly possessed.

But when full acknowledgments have been made of Longfellow's powers in these various fields of accomplishment, it remains true that the great majority of readers persist in loving him for his simple lyrics — "some simple and heartfelt lay" — which have a homely fashion of creeping into the universal heart: such are "The Day is Done," "The Bridge," "The Old Clock on the Stairs," — how the names throng in. Let us have two such, to re-read which is, for most of us, to meet old, dear friends.

THE BRIDGE

I stood on the bridge at midnight,
As the clocks were striking the hour,
And the moon rose o'er the city,
Behind the dark church-tower.

I saw her bright reflection
In the waters under me,
Like a golden goblet falling
And sinking into the sea.

And far in the hazy distance
Of that lovely night in June,
The blaze of the flaming furnace
Gleamed redder than the moon.

Among the long, black rafters
The wavering shadows lay,
And the current that came from the ocean
Seemed to lift and bear them away ;

As, sweeping and eddying through them,
Rose the belated tide,
And, streaming into the moonlight,
The seaweed floated wide.

And like those waters rushing
Among the wooden piers,
A flood of thoughts came o'er me
That filled my eyes with tears.

How often, oh how often,
In the days that had gone by,
I had stood on that bridge at midnight
And gazed on that wave and sky !

How often, oh how often,
I had wished that the ebbing tide
Would bear me away on its bosom
O'er the ocean wild and wide !

For my heart was hot and restless,
And my life was full of care,
And the burden laid upon me
Seemed greater than I could bear.

But now it has fallen from me,
It is buried in the sea ;
And only the sorrow of others
Throws its shadow over me.

Yet whenever I cross the river
On its bridge with wooden piers,
Like the odor of brine from the ocean
Comes the thought of other years.

Literary Leaders of America

And I think how many thousands
Of care-encumbered men,
Each bearing his burden of sorrow,
Have crossed the bridge since then.

I see the long procession
Still passing to and fro,
The young heart hot and restless,
And the old subdued and slow!

And forever and forever,
As long as the river flows,
As long as the heart has passions,
As long as life has woes ;

The moon and its broken reflection
And its shadows shall appear,
As the symbol of love in heaven,
And its wavering image here.

THE DAY IS DONE

The day is done, and the darkness
Falls from the wings of Night,
As a feather is wafted downward
From an eagle in his flight.

I see the lights of the village
Gleam through the rain and the mist,
And a feeling of sadness comes o'er me
That my soul cannot resist :

A feeling of sadness and longing
That is not akin to pain,
And resembles sorrow only
As the mist resembles the rain.

Come, read to me some poem,
Some simple and heartfelt lay,

That shall soothe this restless feeling,
And banish the thoughts of day.

Not from the grand old masters,
Not from the bards sublime,
Whose distant footsteps echo
Through the corridors of Time.

For, like strains of martial music,
Their mighty thoughts suggest
Life's endless toil and endeavor;
And to-night I long for rest.

Read from some humbler poet,
Whose songs gushed from his heart,
As showers from the clouds of summer,
Or tears from the eyelids start;

Who, through long days of labor,
And nights devoid of ease,
Still heard in his soul the music
Of wonderful melodies.

Such songs have power to quiet
The restless pulse of care,
And come like the benediction
That follows after prayer.

Then read from the treasured volume
The poem of thy choice,
And lend to the rhyme of the poet
The beauty of thy voice.

And the night shall be filled with music,
And the cares, that infest the day,
Shall fold their tents, like the Arabs,
And as silently steal away.

In a fine sonnet on Tennyson, Longfellow addressed him as the "sweet historian of the heart"; the line may most aptly be fitted to himself. It is because he does

interpret the best instincts of the emotional life of average men and women with simplicity, felicity, and truth, that he will long be cherished; and it is when he in like manner interprets the fundamental human needs and aspirations in the framework of a narrative like "Evangeline" that he performs the same service in his longer poems. There is no particular demerit in making yourself understood in verse by the so-called general reader, although some very precious messages may be more subtle and more uniquely expressed. If Longfellow is not strikingly original, not dynamically great like Browning, or if the magic touch of a Poe is denied him, the good he did will match either of them. One thing he certainly was: a master in verse, an artist of literary expression. And while conceding that he was not a profound thinker, one may not hesitate to ask if it is the first business of the poet to *be* a profound thinker; if he have not done his duty when by the charm of form and of music he revivifies what is a common property until it seem new and precious.

Longfellow, for all his writing days, worked with high purpose and patient toil at his craft. He believed in the poetic function, he took his task seriously. He polished his works as every good workman should; but once it was given to the world, he did not fuss over it nor pother over the minute changes which make life miserable for the editors of some bards. His devotion to his art had in it something of religious consecration. He knew that poetry when it was true to itself had as lofty a mission as any utterance of man.

When the American who is in London steps into Westminster Abbey—that splendid mausoleum of the worthy dead of a dominant race—nothing in the Poets' Corner

thrills him more, if I may here express my own experience, than to behold the marble bust of Longfellow, the only memorial to a maker of American literature in that historic place. By general consent and the acclaim of two sister peoples he was selected as the bard to represent us there.

The choice is a significant commentary upon the nature of Longfellow's fame at the time of his death. It did not mean that English critical opinion would necessarily accord to him the laurels in American song. But it did express the feeling that the poet had entered into the general current of literature abroad and become more widely influential than any other American. Hence was his name most fittingly inscribed where men who have used the English speech with power and beauty and to purposes of good are remembered by their own people. Longfellow had become a link in the chain which binds us to our kinsmen across the water ; and as, gravely lovely in the sculptured stone, he looks down upon a visitor to the great church so full of reverberations of the mighty past, his lips would seem to say : "Lo, we who make beauty in song and story are the true bringers-in of peace ; since all mankind may be knit together by the bond of beautiful words and in the broad brotherhood of noble thoughts."

CHAPTER IX

HOLMES

IT is hard to realize that in the same year, 1809, which gave birth to Poe, who already seems so far back in our literary history, dying as he did before the middle of the nineteenth century, Oliver Wendell Holmes was born, whose slight, alert figure was only yesterday pacing the streets of Boston.

Dr. Holmes, like Bryant, was an octogenarian and saw with the keenest interest and with none of the old-age conservative horror in change, a veritable revolution in scientific and religious thought,—indeed, became himself a spokesman of the new truth. He never grew old,—he was eighty years young, as somebody said of him. The work he did in prose and verse took the impress of the finely mundane quality of his genius and made him always a man of his time, interpreting with wit and wisdom the meaning of modern social life. It was by his sunny gift for social interpretation that he won his large audience and will live.

Following what may be called the rule of our New England writers, Holmes came of clerical stock, his father being a Congregational minister of Cambridge, Oliver's birthplace. His mother was a Wendell,—as the name implies, of Dutch descent, but also deriving from the colonial Bradstreets, thus connecting him with Anne Brad-

street, the colonial poetess. The Holmeses settled in Woodstock, Connecticut, in the late seventeenth century, but soon came to Massachusetts. Dr. Holmes (the title is universally used in a sort of affectionate recognition of his gentle autocracy) referred to himself as of the "Brahmin caste" of New England; he was indeed of its best, and well did he maintain its ideal of intellectual cultivation and moral worth.

The peculiar vivacity always characteristic of Holmes, as well as his small stature, seems to have come from his mother, whose diminutive figure and lively manners are described by the biographer. Holmes, after attendance at the Cambridgeport Academy, where his fellow-pupils included Margaret Fuller and R. H. Dana, the novelist of the sea, went to Andover Academy when he was fifteen for his college preparation. It was a matter of course that a Cambridge clergyman should send his boy to Harvard, and thither Wendell dutifully fared in 1825, and four years later was graduated. As a young boy he had evinced a vivid interest in books and begun to rhyme; the rhyming tendency was in the immediate family, since his father was at least a respectable author in verse. In every college class there is some fellow who has sufficient mastery in metrical writing, if not genuine poetic call, to be elected class poet. There were two such in the Harvard class of '29; Oliver Wendell Holmes and James Freeman Clarke, and the former was chosen as its representative. In the class, too, was S. F. Smith, author of the famous patriotic hymn, "America"; but as he did not apparently contest for the position, it would appear that his poetic promise had not been revealed. This class poem by Holmes was the beginning of the long series of verses for all sorts of

college occasions, which for a generation flowed from the ready pen and readier wit of the genial Doctor.

A year of law study at the Harvard Law School followed the undergraduate course. When in doubt, try law, might be named as the regular principle of the literary aspirant. But this one year was sufficient to deflect him to the study of medicine, and he passed two years in Boston working at this profession, and then went abroad to carry on his studies, with headquarters in Paris, where he had the advantage of lectures by famous specialists. During the years thus spent he also made trips to England, Germany, and Italy. By 1836 he had his M.D. degree and began to practice in Boston. Young physicians are not in the habit of doing a large business at once, and Dr. Holmes was no exception; in fact, his professional success as a practitioner was never a thing to boast of, his laurels being rather those of a teacher and investigator. He became Professor of Anatomy in Dartmouth College in 1839 at the age of thirty, held it for a year, and in 1847 was given the same chair at Harvard, being also elected dean; and here his service covered thirty-five years. His medical papers were of genuine ability and as a teacher he was brilliant. It has been suggested that perhaps the fact that he was a wit and a literary man may have prevented his private practice from growing; people like a doctor to stick strictly to business, they tolerate a quack before a wag. Holmes made merry over his small practice and declared that the smallest fevers would be gratefully received; but as a college lecturer his humor and happy power of presentation made him vastly popular, and he won the enviable reputation of being the only man who, late in a day of many recitations,

could hold the attention of a collegiate audience. In the year he left Dartmouth he married Miss Amelia L. Jackson, and on coming to Boston took up a life full of cultivated social opportunities and a broadening culture.

The years slipped by, and Holmes was getting well along in years without really showing his hand in literature. He was known socially as a wit, *raconteur*, and general good fellow; he was a clever, graceful, occasional poet; and he was a successful scholar in his chosen field; but, when he was past forty-five years of age, he had no broad literary reputation, nor was he primarily regarded as a man of letters. In 1857 something occurred which changed all this: the *Atlantic Monthly* had been founded in this year and Lowell had accepted the editorship, and only done so on the condition that Dr. Holmes should be his first contributor. When Holmes was called upon for the contribution, he bethought him of two papers which he had published a quarter of a century before in the *New England Magazine*. He began to furbish these papers up and to extend them; during the years 1857 to 1858 appeared serially in the *Atlantic* "The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table"; and the medical lecturer, the local wit, became a literary man of national reputation. Looked back upon, it almost seems like a happy fluke. Dr. Holmes himself declared that Lowell, by urging him to contribute to the *Atlantic*, woke him "from a kind of literary lethargy in which I was half slumbering."

The remainder of his life was a succession of literary successes, of widening reputation, of larger social contact, and of recognition on all sides and in every way. The trilogy of the Breakfast Table was completed by the "Professor at the Breakfast Table" in 1859 and "The

Poet at the Breakfast Table" in 1872, both of them appearing in the *Atlantic*. Two notable pieces of fiction, "Elsie Venner," in 1861, and "The Guardian Angel," in 1867, were also serials in the *Atlantic*, to which Holmes's creative work went first, as a matter of course. He wrote a memoir of Motley in 1878, and the life of Emerson in the "American Men of Letters" series in 1884. "A Mortal Antipathy" dates from 1885, and two delightful old-age books of essays, "Over the Tea-cups" in 1890 (a fourth book to go with the Autocrat series) and "Our Hundred Days in Europe" in 1887, declared that the charm of the essayist was little weakened by the fact that he was past the psalmist's allotment of life. Dr. Holmes visited Europe in 1886 and the last-mentioned book was the direct and charming outcome of this experience, while in his Tea-cup chats he treated the fact of old age in a charming vein of gentle humor and delicate pathos. He was given the Harvard LL.D. in 1880 and the degree of Doctor of Letters from Cambridge, and D.C.L. from Oxford. His closing years were peaceful, honored and full of a calm enjoyment. Not only honor but affection was his in unusual measure. He divided his year between his Beacon Street house in Boston and his beautiful summer residence at Beverly Farms; and he passed away in the mid-autumn of 1894. So long had he lived that he was well-nigh the "last leaf upon the tree": Longfellow, Emerson, Lowell, and Whittier had gone,—the Quaker poet but two years before. His classmates of the famous class of '29, for whose meetings he had written many a sprightly verse, had been reduced until he was almost the sole survivor. The evenings at the famous dinners of the Saturday Club in Boston, when his sparkling wit was relished by a full circle of

companion wits, savants, and poets, were very far behind. Holmes clung almost pathetically to life and took a sort of scientific interest in seeing how long by a proper care of his body he could survive; but after all, deep in his heart he must have been well content to go.

The versatility of Dr. Holmes is perhaps what one first thinks of in reviewing his work and trying to understand his place in our literature. To begin with, he was socially a remarkable figure, and his position in Boston for more than a generation, unique. In a sense he seemed its *genius loci* — expressive of what it stood for in the way of social breeding, grace, and distinction. He was a wonderful talker; not a formal conversationalist like Alcott, who harangued while the silent circle listened, almost hypnotized by the unceasing flow; but a man who also listened well, who stimulated others, and who made a drawing-room scintillant with his epigrams, while his *bons mots* were a part of the best traditions of the famous Puritan city. Holmes made puns, and justified them by their cleverness — in itself a real achievement. George William Curtis has compared his conversation to a “humming bird supping the one honeyed drop from every flower.” It may not have been he who declared that the typical Boston person is the east wind made flesh; but it should have been, for it sounds like him. His readiness on an occasion was proverbial. At the time when he was delivering the Lowell lectures in a down-town hall in Boston, there was a custodian whose business it was to see to it that the speaker did not run over the allotted time of an hour. The gentle hint he gave was to appear at the end of the hour for the purpose of closing the doors. Dr. Holmes was under full steam in a talk about Walter Scott, and the

audience hung on his words. But the hour was up and the guardian came into sight at the rear of the hall. Holmes stopped abruptly, clapped his hands, and vented this impromptu couplet, which, it will be observed, is quite in keeping with the spirit of Sir Walter's poetry upon which he had been dilating :—

'Tis time that the portcullis fall ;
The warder waits to close the hall.

The audience saw the point, and burst into laughter and applause. This anecdote, by the way, has never before been in print.

And this sparkle of talk which Dr. Holmes gave forth with such delightful spontaneity in society, got into his verse and his essays, and particularly into the latter ; he could talk in print as well as in society,—his Autocrat papers were a sort of inspired chat. “What do I mean by the real talkers ?” he queries therein ; “why, the people with fresh ideas, of course, and plenty of good warm words to dress them in.” Holmes had both the ideas and the happy idiom in which to express them. And moreover, Bostonese to the finger-tips, his very sense of humor saved him from what is perhaps that city's subtlest danger : taking himself and the town too seriously. To a lady who spoke admiringly to him of his famous definition of Boston as the Hub of the Universe, he replied : “And the best of it is, you don't see the joke.” “What do you mean ?” “That we believe it,” twinkled the doctor. Was there ever a keener satire ? There was a frankness about him which showed itself in a kind of naïve appreciation of his own powers, entirely harmless and inoffensive. He liked to be told that his poems were beautiful, he liked

to read them to admiring listeners. But there was absolutely nothing of the egoist, in the unpleasant sense, in him.

Holmes, then, was a humorist, and no study of American humor can omit his name. His fun was that of the fine gentleman and appealed equally to the head and the heart. He had wit, that intellectual quality which sees incongruities and expresses them in such apt terms of language that a keen, mental delight follows; but quite as truly, he had that atmospheric quality of humor which rests upon kindness, exhibits temperament, and is so close akin to pathos that often the two blend, as does an April day of sun and shower. In the second book of the Autocrat series, wherein the Professor is the speaker, the Story of Iris, embedded like a precious stone in the lighter satire of the book, is a tenderly pathetic love-romance and a fine example of the underlying emotional seriousness of the author, as many of his passages which grapple with some serious topic of the day are of his equally serious intellectual position.

Dr. Holmes's greatest ambition was to be a poet. Yet his achievements in prose, on the whole, outweigh what he did in verse, familiar and well loved as are certain of his lyrics. He will be longest remembered as an essayist. His writing life may be divided into two parts of which 1857, the year of the founding of the *Atlantic*, is the line of separation. Before that date he wrote most of his poems, and the best of them; afterwards came his prose triumphs. Fully one-half of all Dr. Holmes's metrical writing consisted of that composed for some occasion, — a dinner, a birthday, a college reunion, or a funeral, — no man of his time had his felicity for such things. But,

from its very nature, comparatively little of this could remain; such verse is inevitably so special in its application and so local that it cannot abide. That a few such pieces are still quoted, and to be found in collections, only testifies to Dr. Holmes's exceptional gift in this field.

But entirely aside from these poems of occasion, Holmes produced a few lyrics which have taken a firm place in popular regard; and they are of several kinds. One of them is the light verse — almost what the French call *vers société* — of which "The Last Leaf" is an exquisite and perfect example, with its delicate interplay of pathos and humor, its quaint suggestion of eighteenth-century old-fashioned gentility, — like a Watteau picture or a minuet danced in powdered wigs and knee breeches.

THE LAST LEAF

I saw him once before,
As he passed by the door,
 And again
The pavement stones resound,
As he totters o'er the ground
 With his cane.

They say that in his prime,
Ere the pruning-knife of Time
 Cut him down,
Not a better man was found
By the Crier on his round
 Through the town.

But now he walks the streets,
And he looks at all he meets
 Sad and wan,
And he shakes his feeble head,
That it seems as if he said,
 "They are gone."

The mossy marbles rest
On the lips that he has prest
 In their bloom,
And the names he loved to hear
Have been carved for many a year
 On the tomb.

My grandmamma has said —
Poor old lady, she is dead
 Long ago —
That he had a Roman nose,
And his cheek was like a rose
 In the snow ;

But now his nose is thin,
And it rests upon his chin
 Like a staff,
And a crook is in his back,
And a melancholy crack
 In his laugh.

I know it is a sin
For me to sit and grin
 At him here ;
But the old three-cornered hat,
And the breeches, and all that,
 Are so queer !

And if I should live to be
The last leaf upon the tree
 In the spring,
Let them smile, as I do now,
At the old forsaken bough
 Where I cling.

That Holmes could, like his fellow-poets of New England, strike a clear and stirring note of patriotism, is well exemplified by "Old Ironsides," — one of the lyrics that is

more effective in influencing public opinion than a legislative act.

Holmes also wrote a number of pieces in which he used homely New England subjects, as did Lowell in the "Biglow Papers," and of these none is better known and liked than "The Deacon's Masterpiece," wherein that one-hoss shay, dear to us all from childhood, is limned once and forever. So familiar is this deliciously humorous and characteristic lyric that it hardly needs quoting here. It will be better to give room to a poem in which Dr. Holmes showed that he could rise to a very noble height when writing a serious lyric in the best traditions of English poetry. I refer to "The Chambered Nautilus," perhaps of all his poetry that one which his judicious admirers would choose from the large body of his metrical work.

THE CHAMBERED NAUTILUS

This is the ship of pearl, which, poets feign,
Sails the unshadowed main,—
The venturous bark that flings
On the sweet summer wind its purpled wings
In gulfs enchanted, where the Siren sings,
And coral reefs lie bare,
Where the cold sea-maids rise to sun their streaming hair.
Its webs of living gauze no more unfurl;
Wrecked is the ship of pearl!
And every chambered cell,
Where its dim dreaming life was wont to dwell,
As the frail tenant shaped his growing shell,
Before thee lies revealed,—
Its irised ceiling rent, its sunless crypt unsealed!
Year after year beheld the silent toil
That spread his lustrous coil;

Still, as the spiral grew,
He left the past year's dwelling for the new,
Stole with soft step its shining archway through,
Built up its idle door,
Stretched in his last-found home, and knew the old no more.

Thanks for the heavenly message brought by thee,
Child of the wandering sea,
Cast from her lap, forlorn !
From thy dead lips a clearer note is born
Than ever Triton blew from wreathèd horn !
While on my ear it rings,
Through the deep caves of thought I hear a voice that sings :—
Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul,
As the swift seasons roll !
Leave thy low-vaulted past !
Let each new temple, nobler than the last,
Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast,
Till thou at length art free,
Leaving thine outgrown shell by life's unresting sea !

Much of his best verse, which is now to be found in the collected editions of his poems, was originally thrown off in connection with the Autocrat papers, and it is one of the pleasant experiences of reading his essays to find some favorite lyric hidden there. In all his verse one may note a certain old-fashioned quality as to meter and manner of phrasing. Holmes always admired Pope, and Pope's influence can be seen in him. The freer movement and the wider lyric utterance of the greatest contemporary poets are not as a rule to be found in his work. Had he left nothing but verse, he would have been regarded as a graceful, charming poet, a few of whose lyrics well deserve to survive ; but not a writer to take his place side by side with Poe and Emerson, or with Longfellow, Whittier, and

Lowell. Neither the range nor the quality of his work, viewed as a whole, would have justified it. As we have said, it is a certain aspect of his prose that has put him where he is.

For Holmes was an essayist of very high quality, with a distinction all his own; and without for a moment depreciating his work in other fields, it is here that he has most significance for American literature. He was not only a man of wit and elegance but a genuine thinker, too, dowered with such a gift for statement and illustration that his wisdom seems like wit. Holmes was, in his *Autocrat* series, a genuine intellectual leader, letting in upon musty and narrow conventions—social, scientific, religious, political, or whatever—the clear, dry, vivifying sunlight of a fine intellect and a tolerant nature. He pierced the shams of medicine, he heralded the new discoveries of science in all directions, he pointed out the difference between a real spiritual condition and the dry bones of dogma. And he did it all, not like a sermon, but with infinite good humor and good breeding, with the pleasing manners of a man of the world. He gave a slight framework of fiction to his *Breakfast Table* series; the varied group of men and women around the social board talk in their own persons,—yet all the while you feel that the Doctor has simply dramatized his own talk for the purposes of greater liberty in giving his mind. This is the mark of the true essayist. The method of the fictionist is entirely different; his aim is other and the way he attains it. The essayist is a writer who can indulge in a confidential talk with his reader; and who can say a wise thing in so light and happy a way that you think you are simply amused when in reality you are set a-think-

ing and made broader and better. Dr. Holmes belongs to the race of real essayists (and how very few they are) because upon every page he gives us such a delightful revelation of himself, while he is discussing all the affairs of the universe.

How pleasantly, for example, does he satirize pretentious half-knowledge in the following familiar passage from the "Autocrat":—

He? Veneers in first-rate style. The mahogany scales off now and then in spots, and then you see the cheap light stuff. — I found — very fine in conversational information, the other day, when we were in company. The talk ran upon mountains. He was wonderfully well acquainted with the leading facts about the Andes, the Apennines, and the Appalachians; he had nothing in particular to say about Ararat, Ben Nevis, and various other mountains that were mentioned. By and by some Revolutionary anecdote came up, and he showed singular familiarity with the lives of the Adamses, and gave many details relating to Major André. A point of Natural History being suggested, he gave an excellent account of the air-bladder of fishes. He was very full upon the subject of agriculture, but retired from the conversation when horticulture was introduced in the discussion. So he seemed well acquainted with the geology of anthracite, but did not pretend to know anything of other kinds of coal. There was something so odd about the extent and limitations of his knowledge, that I suspected all at once what might be the meaning of it, and waited till I got an opportunity. — "Have you seen the 'New American Cyclopædia'?" said I. — "I have," he replied; "I received an early copy." — "How far does it go?" He turned red and answered, — "To Araguay." — "Oh," said I to myself, — "not quite so far as Ararat; that is the reason he knew nothing about it; but he must have read all the rest straight through, and, if he can remember what is in this volume until he has read all those that are to come, he will know more than I ever thought he would."

Let the Professor, too, speak briefly (but oh, how keenly!) of the two professions of medicine and the ministry. There is to my mind little diminution of the Holmes flavor in the successive volumes of this essay group; certainly the Professor talks as well and as brilliantly as the Poet, albeit he is a little more serious in his handling of the graver themes.

"Here, look at medicine. Big wigs, gold-headed canes, Latin prescriptions, shops full of abominations, recipes a yard long, 'curing' patients by drugging, as sailors bring a wind by whistling, telling lies at a guinea apiece — a routine, in short, of giving unfortunate sick people a mess of things either too odious to swallow or too acrid to hold, or, if that were possible, both at once. You don't know what I mean, indignant and not unintelligent country practitioner? Then you don't know the history of medicine — and that is not my fault." . . .

"The clergy have played the part of the fly-wheel in our modern civilization. They have never suffered it to stop. They have often carried on its movement, when other moving powers failed, by the momentum stored in their vast body. Sometimes, too, they have kept it back by their *vis inertiae*, when its wheels were like to grind the bones of some old canonized error into fertilizers of the soil that yields the bread of life. But the main-spring of the world's onward religious movement is not in them, nor in any body of men, let me tell you. It is the people that makes the clergy, and not the clergy that makes the people. Of course, the profession reacts on its source with variable energy. But there never was a guild of dealers, or a company of craftsmen who did not need sharp looking after."

The electrically alive modern man is to be discovered in such passages; indeed, dip into any book of this same series at random, and you will be likely to get an electric charge of thought along the wire of a personality which emits both light and heat.

In the order here given, Dr. Holmes produced, as has been said, three pieces of fiction,—perhaps best styled psychological romances, with a definite underlying aim. The first and most striking was “Elsie Venner”; the others are “The Guardian Angel” and “A Mortal Antipathy,” all of them published after he was fifty years of age, and the last (decidedly the weakest) when he was nearer eighty than seventy. They were all what is now called “purpose novels,” and that purpose to portray under a veil of fiction the workings of heredity. In writing to Harriet Beecher Stowe, he says of “Elsie Venner” that he wished “to write a story with enough of interest in its characters and incidents to attract a certain amount of popular attention. Under cover of this to stir that mighty question of automatic agency in its relation to self-determination.” In thus dealing with the “mysterious borderland which lies between physiology and psychology,” Holmes trespasses in some sort upon the domain of Hawthorne. In “Elsie Venner” the fact of heredity is portrayed in the powerful pre-natal influence of a snake upon a susceptible girl; a gruesome theme, full of suggestion and a certain kind of fascination. “The Guardian Angel,” in which the inheritance is that of Indian blood, is lighter in its tone and a favorite for its mingled wit and satire. But the medical man, the scientist, is apparent in these books, to the injury of the novelist pure and simple; hence, interesting and able as they are, they belong in the second class of the author’s creative work.

It is only necessary to add that during his wonderfully active and long life as a writer, Dr. Holmes did a good deal of solid literary criticism, in which his graces of style lighted up the serious and what would have been, in some

hands, the heavy matter of his theme ; as well as producing much special work in the field of his chosen profession — one paper, that on puerperal fever, being regarded as a valuable addition to medical knowledge. The variety of his talent, the extent of his interests, the polydextrous display of his activity, are thus evidenced.

No American author makes a more distinct personal impression than Oliver Wendell Holmes ; none is more affectionately remembered. Perhaps in the last analysis it is just this personal attitude he bears to his audience that will keep his memory green. The true essayist has always the possibility of entering into this vital relation with his readers. One feels that there is something personal, almost private, in such an author's message to one's self, and this is part of his charm. Occasionally a writer seems to have a mission to draw mankind together in the social bond. This service Dr. Holmes performed, and we think of the genial Autocrat as of a personal friend when we take his name on our lips. To be in literature a friend to countless men and women, beloved whether he be grave or gay, was the good fortune of the Little Man of Boston, who yet occupies so large a place among the New England writers.

CHAPTER X

WHITTIER

ANOTHER New England country boy who became a well-loved singer is John Greenleaf Whittier, of all our bards most appropriately called a poet of the people. Nothing is more striking in the study of our elder men of letters than the frequency with which by sheer force of character and against whatever odds, they came to perform great services and win a noble fame. Thus, in their own persons, do they express the American idea.

This leader of literature was of good family, using the phrase in the signification most worth while. His ancestors had dwelt in Eastern Massachusetts a hundred and fifty years when he was born. They were God-fearing, law-abiding, hard-working folk, tillers of the soil who did yeoman service in this homely fashion for the commonwealth. His seventeenth-century ancestor, Thomas Whittier, was a man of large mental and moral stature, a giant, too, in body, who settled in 1638 in Salisbury, near Amesbury, Massachusetts, which was later to become the poet's home. In 1647 this elder Whittier removed to Haverhill and hewed the oaken beams for the homestead where John Greenleaf Whittier was born in December of 1807, two years before Poe's birth in Boston, hard by. His mother was a Greenleaf, of a race of farmers, with ancestors of genuine importance; and the boy seems to have derived

his most marked traits from her. Indeed, it is worth remarking that in the study of great men again and again one is struck by the fact that the maternal influence—what has been quaintly called the spindle side of the house—is most potent to form character and shape destiny. Whittier's mother united strength and sweetness; she strove for her son's education, she fostered his early literary leanings, she was in close sympathy with the gifted boy, intellectually and in all ways. The father, on the other hand, was a forthright farmer, who desired his son to be a farmer, too.

Whittier was frail-bodied and the long and busy life he led, though constantly hampered by ill-health, was, no doubt, the result of the care he took of himself, the fact that, unlike men of stronger build, he dared not take risks and abuse his health.

The Whittier home in the east parish of Haverhill, Massachusetts, can still be visited, for it is preserved as a memorial, with the original furniture and many souvenirs of great interest. Of late it has been injured by fire, but the restoration was speedily effected. The house is picturesquely set in hills and woods and is a fine specimen of the plain, comfortable farmhouse of the better class common to old New England. From its big kitchen, reproduced so charmingly in "Snow-Bound," to the unfinished, dark-raftered room in the second story, where the boy Whittier slept, it makes real the early days of the poet as no words can. John took his part in the chores and farm duties, though his health kept him from the heavier work. He loved dogs, horses, and cattle, and got his share of fun, outdoors and in. In his own words, he "found about equal satisfaction in an old rural home,

with the shifting panorama of the seasons, in reading a few books within my reach, and dreaming of something wonderful and good somewhere in the future." These few books comprised, of course, the Bible, and it entered into the very blood and bone of Whittier, as all his writings show. There was also a due proportion of books dealing with the literature of Quakerdom, — for the family had been Quakers since the seventeenth century.

For schooling, he attended the district school intermittently, and one of the teachers there put into his hands one day a volume of Burns's poetry — and lo! the world of song was auspiciously opened to him. A wandering ballad-monger (type of the elder times) had recited Burns to him before this, so he was ready for the Scotch people-poet, whom his own work was in many ways to resemble. This district school stood for Whittier's education until he was nineteen; then certain editors of newspapers in neighboring towns to whose columns Whittier had contributed verses — already he was rhyming — urged the not too-willing father to send him to the Haverhill academy, and his mother's influence was strong for the idea. So, for two terms, the young man had this chance of higher education, taking a turn at teaching between terms and making slippers at twenty-five cents the pair to help pay expenses. This experience gave him access to a town library, and he eagerly absorbed the best in English literature. This much schooling, meager enough one might say, constituted the formal education of John Greenleaf Whittier. But all his life he was a student, and in manhood he offered an excellent example of the self-made man, doubly appreciating his opportunities, and with his unconventional sheepskin signed by the wise head-master, Experience.

Meanwhile, in various local newspapers, his verses were steadily appearing. They attracted attention, and William Lloyd Garrison, who was editing the *Philanthropist* in Boston, tendered Whittier the editorship, which was accepted; in 1828 a young man only just past his majority, he became editor of another paper, the *American Manufacturer*, and so began his long, strenuous journalistic life. During the early and mid-years of his manhood Whittier appeared to the world as a newspaper writer, agitator, and politician, rather than a literary man — though this seems strange enough now. His interest in the work of the press was always keen, his activity constant and influential. The positions he held indicate this. In 1830 he conducted the *Haverhill Gazette*, the next year the *New England Review*, of Hartford, Connecticut, in 1831 again the *Gazette*; for three years (1837 to 1840) the *National Enquirer*, and, up to the time that he assisted in starting the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1857, he had various other newspaper connections in Massachusetts, New York, Philadelphia, and Washington. Whittier's interest in politics began early and never ceased. He kept closely in touch with the shifting political conditions, and his voice was ever urgent and eloquent in prose as well as in poetry, for what he deemed the right. In 1831 he was appointed delegate to the Whig National Convention, and two years later was a delegate to the Antislavery National Convention. It may be seen from this that when a young man in the twenties he already had taken a stand for the cause which always lay so close to his heart: that of freeing the black slaves. The stormiest incidents in Whittier's life are connected with the slavery agitation, for to be an abolitionist in those days was to have the courage of one's

convictions, and to run the risk, not only of social unpopularity, but of bodily harm. Other of the great American writers — Lowell, to mention one stalwart example — did their full share in the movement which led to negro emancipation. But none of them was so active and entered so dramatically into the struggle as did Whittier.

Whittier did not believe in agitation and in war for their own sakes. He had the Quaker sympathy for peace. But there was red blood under the Quaker-cut black, and it flamed forth in lyrics which were as potent to influence public opinion as were the enactments of Congress or a President's message. By 1835 we find him being mobbed in Concord, New Hampshire, because of his participation in antislavery meetings, and companionship with an English abolitionist orator, who was then lecturing in this country. Whittier escaped uninjured, save that he was somewhat lamed and his clothes ruined. Later, at an antislavery convention in Newburyport, he was, as he puts it, "assailed with decayed eggs, sticks, and light missiles," and again in Philadelphia he was a witness of another scene of turbulence from the same cause. Men who were living out their principles in this way got something into their writings which the recluse scholar and do-nothing doctrinaire can never command.

While the physically frail Whittier of the indomitable spirit was thus in the thick of the fight, there were changes at the rural home. The father had died, and in 1836 the paternal farm was sold and the family moved to Amesbury, only a few miles away, where a modest house was purchased. This Amesbury cottage, which was altered and improved from time to time, was the chief residence of the poet for the rest of his days, a period of over half a cen-

ture. He always returned to it with pleasure, and indeed from 1840 was able to live in it for the most part. Much of his editorial and other work for the papers, wherever situated, could be done at home, and this home life with the dear mother and the sainted sister, Elizabeth,—one of those angels in the house to glorify the homely things of life,—was an ideal one. There is in the Amesbury cottage, a certain room called the garden room; it gives upon a beautiful, old-fashioned garden, and in it for many years Whittier wrote his best-known poems, stepping through a door into the midst of his flower-bordered walks, if the weather permitted, there, perhaps, to put the last touches upon some lyric, while the birds and flowers of which he wrote sang and bloomed about him.

There is a touch of pathos in the fact that Whittier remained a bachelor. He was devoted to his women-folks at home, and was by no means a misogynist, touching the sex in general. Indeed, out of his own mouth he stands confessed as an advocate of marriage. He wrote to James T. Fields, his publisher, on the former's marriage: "Bachelor as I am, I congratulate thee on thy escape from single (misery) blessedness. It is the very wisest thing thee ever did. Were I autocrat, I would see to it that every young man over twenty-five, and every young woman over twenty was married without delay. Perhaps, on second thought, it might be well to keep one old maid and one old bachelor in each town, by way of warning, just as the Spartans did their drunken helots." It may be added that all through his life Whittier's friendships with women were many and warm; he delighted in this companionship and communion. It is believed that there was a touch of romance early in Whittier's life. At a time

when he was residing in New York City he met the young Massachusetts poet, Lucy Hooper, and, so runs the account, fell in love with her. She died at the age of twenty-four, and the pensively beautiful lyric "Memories," in all probability, has an autobiographic value. None of our poets has treated love with a purer, lovelier idealism than Whittier, and the man's life history is in consonance with this spirit of his work.

Whittier's prose works we can afford to ignore in this study of his place as one of the standard American poets. He began to publish his poetry very young, "Moll Pitcher" dating from 1832, when he was twenty-five. It will be unnecessary to enumerate the long list of his books, but it is of special interest to note that the first general issue of his poems appeared in 1837. This publication would indicate that by this time, when Whittier was a little over thirty, his work was deemed of sufficient importance to thus gather into a distinct collection. From the very start of his poetic career, he acquired the reputation of a newspaper bard. Much of his verse was of the polemic kind, treating of some topic of the moment, fluent and facile, and, hence, also hasty and sometimes careless in its art. He soon gained a popular rather than a critical reputation, for a man may print a great deal of newspaper verse without receiving recognition in the best magazines, or may appear with frequency in the magazines, and yet not be reckoned with by the more serious readers of book poetry. Therefore, with regard to the solid reputation that really counts, Whittier won his way with comparative slowness. A striking proof of all this is given in the fact that his volume entitled "Lays of My Home," published in 1843, when he was nearer forty than thirty years old,

was the first edition of his works to bring him a financial reward worth mentioning. Up to this time he had no realization of the market value of his wares. Yet, every once in a while, he was writing some fiery lyric like "Massachusetts to Virginia," evoked by the Latimer fugitive slave case, or the "Texas: Voice of New England," which came when the country was deeply stirred by the question of the admission of that republic as a free state. In such volumes as "Lays of My Home," "Voices of Freedom," and "Songs of Labor," many fugitive pieces which, at the time, seemed perhaps newspaper verse and nothing more, have come to be known, loved, and permanently registered amid the poetry of patriotism of our country.

Up to 1857 Whittier was slowly creeping into an assured place in letters. Gradually he had been drawn away from the more practical life of editor and agitator and politician, toward literature. Back in 1835 he was a representative from Haverhill in the Massachusetts legislature; we positively know that at that period of his career he wished to become a politician and looked forward to its rewards, giving up that way of life because of his ill-health. His withdrawal to the quiet Amesbury home, congenial as it was, was in part, at least, enforced by his physical condition. Whittier had many of the qualifications to make a statesman, and long after he gave up the idea of practical participation in that kind of life, he was consulted by leaders like Charles Sumner as one whose opinion was of the very highest value. In the years just preceding the opening of the war the air was electrically charged, and Whittier's poems touching upon the vital question of the day inevitably increased his reputation. It was a great day for song; there was something

epical in its very air. Western pioneers marched to lyrics that voiced mighty principles. A man like Whittier could ill be spared from the procession of national progress, for his eye looked far beyond party, and his stern insistence on a high moral principle gave him a power very different from the facile influence of the mere politician. Hence the Boston firm of Ticknor & Fields thought it an excellent time, in 1856, to bring out a volume in which many of his standard pieces are to be found, — "Maud Muller" among them, the authenticity of whose heroine the author always valiantly defended, and such other lyrics as "Burns," "Tauler," "The Barefoot Boy," and "The Kansas Emigrants." Following hard upon this volume came in 1857 a complete edition of his poems called "The Blue and Gold" edition, in the same style which the publishers had just given to Longfellow's works; and this same year was founded the famous *Atlantic Monthly* in Boston, still the most dignified, scholarly, and, in the old sense, literary of American periodicals. And Whittier, along with such other leaders as Emerson, Mrs. Stowe, Lowell, Longfellow, Holmes, Prescott, and Motley, received a cordial invitation to become a contributor. This magazine connection gave him a critical rating which before he did not possess. It meant a recognition of him by the small number of readers, who, in some sort, guarded the approaches to literature, the awarding of a place long before granted to Whittier by the people at large, who, after all, are in the habit of settling these things for themselves. Most of the poet's finest work for the next ten years went into the *Atlantic*, and his "The Gift of Tritemius" appeared in the first number. The comparatively liberal pay of the *Atlantic* for contributions

placed the poet in easier circumstances; and yet he was hardly released from the very familiar money-pinch until the success of "Snow-Bound" in 1866. Socially, too, the *Atlantic* contact brought him into delightful relations, and we get pleasant pictures of Whittier as he occasionally dropped into Boston drawing-rooms, soon to return, however, to the beloved retreat at Amesbury.

The appearance of the man was striking. He wore a coat of Quaker cut, his figure was erect and slight, with a notably alert carriage, the eyes brown and wonderfully brilliant, and an effect of serene gravity in his whole personality. In his youth he was described by a woman friend as a very handsome, distinguished-looking young man. All his life, indeed, he was a distinguished-looking person. The very year of the *Atlantic's* initiation brought Whittier heavy sorrow,—typical of the tragi-comedy we call life. His mother died at the Amesbury home, and, as he wrote to Sumner the day after, half the motive power of life seemed lost. In one of his best poems, "Telling the Bees," which appeared within a month after her death, one seems to have testimony that sorrow can be translated into beautiful song. When war opened Whittier found plenty of inspiration, as might be expected, in its stirring events. In the middle of the conflict appeared his book "In War Time," and therein, whether with "Barbara Frietchie" or the rest, may be heard the resonant human note of the patriotic poet doing his share for the country. A year later he had to mourn the death of his favorite sister, Lizzie, dearest of his kin remaining, and there appeared the exquisite lyric "The Vanishers,"—again a sacred private experience used for purposes of public consolation. When the war ended, Whittier's

fighting days were over. He could now turn from the stern and stormy utterances of his mid-manhood, and in ripe maturity look back upon his earlier and peacefuller days and write "Snow-Bound," and many another household lyric of his country youth. With "Snow-Bound," perhaps the most deservedly popular of all his poems, Whittier became a truly national poet, if he was not before. Such verse, homely in subject, happy in feeling, warmly human in sentiment, has both the relish of reality and the delicate idealization of a true poet's vision. Such song has a household virtue. Its success was instant and hearty. Materially, it meant more money than Whittier had ever dreamed he would earn. The first edition of the book netted him ten thousand dollars. Yet this material success came late, when we realize that the poet was now well-nigh sixty years of age. "Snow-Bound" is too long for quotation here, and rather than give extracts from it I would commend its entire reading to the student. It can be universally appreciated, for it is a perfect picture of typical scenes in the homely life of a New England household in the early days.

For the long remainder of his life, over a quarter of a century, Whittier lived quietly at Amesbury, spending parts of each year at the beautiful country-place of kinsfolk at Danvers, Massachusetts, and with frequent summer sojourns at neighboring coast resorts, until his death in 1892. He produced a succession of volumes containing many of his favorite poems from "The Tent on the Beach" in 1867 to "At Sundown," which appeared so late as 1890. He wonderfully retained his lyric gift to the last; like Tennyson, his swan-songs sounded as clear a note as was struck by his lyre when he was in the full

flush of his powers. Of course, during these latest years honor and fame grew steadily. He was made an overseer of Harvard College in 1858, and later received her degree of LL.D. He was made a trustee of Brown University. As in the case of all famous men of letters, his acquaintance widened, he was besieged by strangers, and came to know the burden of the autograph collector; but very lovely and pleasant were his days. His friendships among literary men and women were many, and he awoke everywhere a peculiar love by his presence and his worth.

In the early summer of 1892 he had gone to Hampton Falls, New Hampshire, but a few miles from Amesbury, to spend several summer weeks. There he was taken ill, and there he died on September 7. The funeral services were held in the Amesbury garden, into which, as he wrote, he had so often looked, where he had so often paced in poetic meditation. In the picturesque Amesbury burying ground, set apart for the use of the Friends, Whittier lies beside his kin,—the broken circle of "Snow-Bound" reunited in the long sleep.

When Whittier is called a poet of the people, the phrase is unusually fitting. His interests were the common interests of humanity. He did not wrap himself in the trailing garments of poetry in order to hide himself from the common gaze or tread misty regions not habited by the average human being. His verse was always in the best sense practical, vital, direct, and homely. He early elected a great cause as his own and strove for it with his full moral force. In this dispassionate day we can see that he was a partisan, and that there was much to say on the other side of the slavery question. But it is sufficient for the purposes of poetry for a man to feel

himself right and to be aware of the fact that he has a spiritual message. The political and patriotic poetry of Whittier is, therefore, one of the most characteristic aspects of his muse. Yet, on the whole, it does not stand for his highest and best. The noble dignity of the "Centennial Hymn" exhibits him at his best in patriotic verse.

A beautiful side of his power is to be found in his poems of spiritual theme or mood. Of this sort, nothing is more a favorite and deservedly than "The Eternal Goodness," which here follows:—

THE ETERNAL GOODNESS

O friends ! with whom my feet have trod
The quiet aisles of prayer,
Glad witness to your zeal for God
And love of man I bear.

I trace your lines of argument ;
Your logic linked and strong,
I weigh as one who dreads dissent,
And fears a doubt as wrong.

But still my human hands are weak
To hold your iron creeds :
Against the words ye bid me speak
My heart within me pleads.

Who fathoms the Eternal Thought ?
Who talks of scheme and plan ?
The Lord is God ! He needeth not
The poor device of man.

I walked with bare, hushed feet the ground
Ye tread with boldness shod ;
I dare not fix with mete and bound
The love and power of God.

Literary Leaders of America

Ye praise His justice ; even such
His pitying love I deem :
Ye seek a king ; I fain would touch
The robe that hath no seam.

Ye see the curse which overbroods
A world of pain and loss ;
I hear our Lord's beatitudes
And prayer upon the cross.

More than your schoolmen teach, within
Myself, alas ! I know :
Too dark ye cannot paint the sin,
Too small the merit show.

I bow my forehead to the dust,
I veil mine eyes for shame,
And urge, in trembling self-distrust,
A prayer without a claim.

I see the wrong that round me lies,
I feel the guilt within ;
I hear with groan and travail-cries,
The world confess its sin.

Yet in the maddening maze of things,
And tossed by storm and flood,
To one fixed trust my spirit clings ;
I know that God is good !

Not mine to look where cherubim
And seraphs may not see,
But nothing can be good in Him
Which evil is in me.

The wrong that pains my soul below
I dare not throne above,
I know not of His hate, — I know
His goodness and His love.

I dimly guess from blessings known
Of greater out of sight,
And, with the chastened Psalmist, own
His judgments too are right.

I long for household voices gone,
For vanished smiles I long,
But God hath led my dear ones on,
And He can do no wrong.

I know not what the future hath
Of marvel or surprise,
Assured alone that life and death
His mercy underlies.

And if my heart and flesh are weak
To bear an untried pain,
The bruised reed He will not break,
But strengthen and sustain.

No offering of my own I have,
Nor works my faith to prove ;
I can but give the gifts He gave,
And plead His love for love.

And so beside the Silent Sea
I wait the muffled oar ;
No harm from Him can come to me
On ocean or on shore.

I know not where His islands lift
Their fronded palms in air ;
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond His love and care.

O brothers ! if my faith is vain,
If hopes like these betray,
Pray for me that my feet may gain
The sure and safer way.

And Thou, O Lord ! by whom are seen
Thy creatures as they be,
Forgive me if too close I lean
My human heart on Thee !

Of ballads and narrative pieces, of which "Skipper Ireson's Ride," "Maud Muller," and "Barbara Frietchie" are familiar examples, Whittier wrote many, and because of their familiarity it is perhaps less necessary to give them. I prefer to include the poem called "Ichabod," in which he sternly chants of what he considered the moral downfall of Daniel Webster, the result being certainly one of his noblest lyrics.

ICHABOD

So fallen ! so lost ! the light withdrawn
Which once he wore !
The glory from his gray hairs gone
For evermore !

Reville him not, the Tempter hath
A snare for all ;
And pitying tears, not scorn and wrath,
Befit his fall !

Oh, dumb be passion's stormy rage,
When he who might
Have lighted up and led his age,
Falls back in night.

Scorn ! would the angels laugh, to mark
A bright soul driven,
Fiend-goaded, down the endless dark,
From hope and heaven !

Let not the land once proud of him
Insult him now,
Nor brand with deeper shame his dim,
Dishonored brow.

But let its humbled sons, instead,
From sea to lake,
A long lament, as for the dead,
In sadness make.

Of all we loved and honored, naught
Save power remains ;
A fallen angel's pride of thought,
Still strong in chains.

All else is gone ; from those great eyes
The soul has fled :
When faith is lost, when honor dies,
The man is dead !

Then, pay the reverence of old days
To his dead fame ;
Walk backward, with averted gaze,
And hide the shame !

For one more example of the merging of personal sorrow in a beautifully tender and simple faith — a religious attitude typical of all Whittier's life and literature — "The Vanishers" should be read.

But perhaps there is no division of Whittier's verse where the native characteristics of his genius are better to be seen than in those homely narratives and songs and pictures for which "Snow-Bound" stands a type. There are sundry lesser and hence quotable lyrics which here belong, and at least one of them must be included.

We may listen finally to that universal favorite, "In School Days," where the delicate implication of auto-

biographic experience, in the light of what we now know of Whittier's life, lends the needed touch of truth to a pathos which, whether as art or life, goes very deep:—

IN SCHOOL DAYS

Still sits the schoolhouse by the road,
A ragged beggar sleeping ;
Around it still the sumachs grow,
And blackberry vines are creeping.

Within, the master's desk is seen,
Deep scarred by raps official ;
The warping floor, the battered seats,
The jack-knife's carved initial ;

The charcoal frescoes on its wall ;
Its door's worn sill, betraying
The feet that, creeping slow to school,
Went storming out to playing !

Long years ago a winter sun
Shone over it at setting ;
Lit up its western window panes,
And low eaves' icy fretting.

It touched the tangled golden curls,
And brown eyes full of grieving,
Of one who still her steps delayed
When all the school were leaving.

For near her stood the little boy
Her childish favor singled :
His cap pulled low upon a face
Where pride and shame were mingled.

Pushing with restless feet the snow
To right and left, he lingered ;—
As restlessly her tiny hands
The blue-checked apron fingered.

He saw her lift her eyes ; he felt
The soft hand's light caressing,
And heard the tremble of her voice,
As if a fault confessing.

"I'm sorry that I spelt the word :
I hate to go above you,
Because," — the brown eyes lower fell, —
"Because, you see, I love you !"

Still memory to a gray-haired man
That sweet child face is showing.
Dear girl ! the grasses on her grave
Have forty years been growing !

He lives to learn, in life's hard school,
How few who pass above him
Lament their triumph and his loss,
Like her, — because they love him.

It is much for a poet to be beloved as is Whittier ; much for him and much for his country. His place in the native song is far more than an historical thing. It is present and living and potent. His contemporaneous influence was very great ; that part of his work which first gave him prominence has, in the course of years, and with the truer critical discrimination, become subordinate, but his best verse is securer now than ever it was ; is safe in an undying regard.

Whittier's poetry was no perfect thing. He wrote too hastily and too much. His was a day when technique was less considered. The very facility of his metrical writing was for him a dangerous thing. As a result, a large amount of his verse work has been thrown aside ; with few exceptions that which remains could be improved by compression. But on the other hand he had a native

gift for lyric utterance ; he was a natural singer, if there ever was one. His finest lyrics are beautiful as works of art as well as spiritual messages, and it is just in this union of moral purpose with the sense of beauty—I have said elsewhere that the one rhyme of his poetry is that made by beauty and duty—that the true merit of Whittier is to be found, the explanation of his place with the major American singers. He is at once the poet of a section and yet a national poet.

Moreover he was a man whose character was such that one admires him in his life as much as in his literature. Entirely aside from his literary gifts he was in the full sense a good man whose life was sweet and true and high. His religion was a doing of good, and his sincere love for his fellow-men and his wholesome reverence for righteousness, together with his natural singing voice, produced a body of literature not to be obscured by any change of literary models nor effaced by the passing of the years.

CHAPTER XI

LOWELL

IN his "Representative Men" Emerson treats of Goethe as the beau ideal of the man of letters — standing for such an all-round culture and wide contact with the world that the title best describes his varied accomplishment. Lowell, of all our literary men, may be chosen as our representative man of letters; he was more, and yet less, than if he had been solely poet, essayist, or writer of romance. Scholar, teacher, editor, wit, diplomat, — he did many things and did them conspicuously well. And yet, he perhaps might have made a deeper impress upon American literature had he done but the one and with less of versatility, and remained steadfast to a single love. However, the loss in one direction means a gain in the other. James Russell Lowell was a very great citizen besides doing notable work as critic, essayist, and poet. Mr. Aldrich said of him that no American of his day had "so various and admirable gifts."

Hardly more than round the corner from Longfellow's Craigie House in Cambridge, is another stately residence, a fine old house dating from Revolutionary days, set in ample grounds and with an air about it of dignified, rural retirement. This is Elmwood, the family estate where James Russell Lowell was born, lived, and died. It is refreshing, at a time when so many Americans early and

late are of necessity homeless nomads,—living in flats, moving every other year and striking roots into the soil nowhere,—to study the life of a man of letters whose home was that of his forefathers and who, however wide his wanderings, in a sense never left it.

Elmwood plays an important rôle in the drama of Lowell's life. The best of his literature was made under its elms or among the books of its library; and all his days was he set about by books, environed in a culture which only fructified his native power—a proof that culture is for the strong. "Here I am in my garret," he writes in maturity; "I slept here when I was a little curly-headed boy."

Like Longfellow and Holmes, and unlike Whittier and Bryant, Lowell is an example of a New Englander of the best blood and breeding, who had the power to take advantage of his opportunities and not be swamped by them; and so finally became one of our leaders in American literature. The roll of his ancestors, immediate and remote, is rather a formidable one. The Lowell family has for a long time stood high in Massachusetts. The original ancestor was an English merchant who settled there in the early seventeenth century. The city of Lowell was named after the poet's grandfather, who was also known for introducing the manufacture of cotton into this country. That famed institution, the Lowell Institute, with its free lecture system, is the benefaction of his first cousin; his grandfather, John, was a member of the Continental Congress and chief justice in the United States Supreme Court, and it was he who drew up the antislavery clause in the Massachusetts Bill of Rights. His father, Charles, was the long-time pastor of a Unitarian church in Boston,

when Unitarianism was fast becoming fashionable. Such a background for a boy seems almost a handicap in the race of life; it suggests the picture of a spindle-legged, big-headed urchin whose expression is doleful because he has so much to live up to.

But his ancestry does not appear to have worried James Russell Lowell, who was born in 1819, ten years after Whittier and Longfellow, but who in his work and associations may be regarded as their contemporary. His mother was of Scotch descent and had in her memory a store of legendary stories of that land of poetry and romance, which, the report runs, "She sang over the cradles of her children and repeated in their school days until poetic lore and feeling were as natural to them as the bodily senses." Indeed, Lowell has stated that he derived both his love of nature and his poetic temperament from her.

He was a particularly lively, natural, healthy lad, who was educated at a private school, where he exhibited plenty of capacity for fun and frolic, and then did the inevitable thing for a fellow of his sort, — went to Harvard College. At school he was a good scholar, though no dig, and by the time college days came he is revealed in his "Letters" (edited by his friend and literary executor, Prof. C. E. Norton) as a young man who read a great deal, was decidedly literary in his tastes, had high spirits and a good deal of pride, was shy in a way, but possessed of a plentiful supply of humor, — and humor was to be one of Lowell's marked traits as man and writer. He began to develop a love for fine books, books scarce to find and of coveted editions, the estrays and curios of literature. The Elmwood library numbered some four thousand well-chosen volumes and must have been a

fascinating one to nibble one's way through. His reading — and no man read more omnivorously and to better results of culture — was mostly outside of text-books, however, for he says he devoured everything but the necessary aids to college progress. Hence, naturally, his college standing was not remarkable; moreover (the Adam in us will perhaps delight in the fact), the neglect of the curriculum along with certain mysterious pranks which it is hard to learn of definitely from his biographers, led to rustication at Concord in his senior year; this, although he was class poet, so that his poem had to be read by another on class day and he returned at commencement in time to take a sheepskin. It is amusing to know that Lowell, for whom Concord, as a haunt and high seat of the Transcendentalists, might be supposed to have attraction, did not like that classic spot at all.

He was nineteen when he took his degree and — what so often happens with young men inclined towards letters — at sea as to his life-work. Law offered itself as a solution, and at his legal studies at Harvard he went, even going so far as to have an office after the LL.B. was won and, nominally at least, to practice a little. Lowell's legal training can be traced as a definite element in his literary production and certainly added strength to it and so was by no means labor wasted. For four years he was thus a knight of the green bag, in the meanwhile writing magazine papers and eking out in this way his not over-large income. For his first editorial work he started the *Pioneer Magazine* in 1843, to which such notables as Mrs. Browning, and the Americans, Poe and Hawthorne, contributed, but which nevertheless died young, — only three numbers being printed.

What was beyond doubt a turning point in his career came in 1844, when he married Maria White, a New England woman of the finest type; beautiful, cultured, herself a poet, some of whose tender lyrics have survived in the anthologies. She had the instinct of the reformer, with a special interest in the antislavery movement, which was then beginning to be a burning question of the day. Lowell's own fiery championship of the cause of the black man may well have been fanned by her wifely zeal. In any event, he became a frequent contributor to the *Antislavery Standard* and soon was known as an ardent defender of the faith that was in him, — evoking the bitter diatribes of Poe, who, with his hot Southern sympathies, could ill brook the fervor of the New England Abolitionists. Thus Lowell, who in his class-day poem had poked fun at these reformers, became one of them himself, and, like Whittier, found a motive for his early verse in a great moral issue. He had already published a volume of poems, "A Year's Life," in 1841; which, however, was in no way significant. But three years later, when he was twenty-five, the publication of a book entitled "Poems," drew attention to a man of genuine voice. The next year he revealed himself as a critic to reckon with in "Conversations on Some of the Old Poets," a volume now precious to lovers of American literature in general and of Lowell in particular. These early years were passed at Elmwood in quiet, fruitful study and meditation in his garden; indoors and out alike he found stimulus for his prose and verse; while now and then he flashed forth with a word on slavery which awoke the North; as where, when feeling ran high over the admission of Texas as a state and the consequent extension of slavery in the

country, he published "The Present Crisis" — a stalwart invocation to truth and right even though men beheld

Truth forever on the scaffold, Wrong forever on the throne.

And now there began to appear in the *Boston Courier* in 1846, when Lowell was twenty-seven, the first series of papers which have become everywhere known as the "Biglow Papers"; humorous verse which was, much to the author's surprise, to lift him into a prominence undreamed of and by no means secured by the serious lyric work he had already done. He had written pensive, lovely lyrics like "She Came and Went," "The Changing," "A Requiem"; and in the year the Biglow series began, had appeared one of his nobler poems of culture and foreign theme, "The Vision of Sir Launfal," a treatment of the legend of the Holy Grail, having a spiritual breath and beauty of coloring which remind the reader of Tennyson. In this poem occurs the stanza beginning:—

What is so rare as a day in June,
Then, if ever, come perfect days,

dearly familiar to every lover of American nature and poetry. It was plain enough before that in Lowell America had a bard of gift and great ethical earnestness. But when he conceived and carried out the idea of putting into the mouth of a homely New England farmer, Hosea Biglow, the shrewd rustic wisdom of the countryside, touching the vital questions of the day, local and national, with many comments in the way of introductions and letters by Hosea's parson friend, Wilbur, it was a stroke of genius; and what the author deemed at first a mere newspaper squib, and when it was finished, a *jeu d'esprit*,

became the veritable document of a poet and eventually a standard piece of American literature. This is all the more remarkable in that Lowell started the papers with a bit of verse commenting on the sight of an officer in Boston raising a regiment of recruits for the Mexican War, a purely local incident; verse on other subjects followed, and the collection was published in book form in 1848, the second series as a book in 1867, after it had run in the *Atlantic* during the bellicose years 1862-1866, the poet now having the advantage of the tremendous theme of the Civil War.

While the "Biglow Papers" are described in a phrase as humorous poetry, they are far more than is perhaps implied by the description; humor they have, audacious and unique. Lowell possessed a wonderful talent for handling the Yankee dialect; all his life a student of language, who yet possessed popular sympathies and the red blood of a virile personality, he here drew on these resources. He was a pioneer in using for literary purposes the quaint vernacular of the people. Charles Sumner said of the "Biglow Papers" that it was a pity that they were not written in the English language. But we have come in these days to regard it as one of the merits of modern literature that a Lowell early or a Riley late can let the simple folks speak—it means the coming of the democratic spirit into our letters. Lowell's prose introductions to the Biglow series on New England speech are the best deliverances ever made on the subject.

Both the homely idyllic quality and the canny hard-headedness of the New England democratic type are deliciously conveyed in these papers by a man who really knew and loved them; and with a mastery of the metrical

material such as has never been surpassed in the history of American literature. With this control of the poetic medium, went a deep patriotism, a love alike of section and of country, lifting it all to a height of moral earnestness and power such as to give the verse the dignity of a large vital theme. An extract may follow showing the idyllic aspect of this rural type; a poem always popular because so richly human, so charmingly true to the unchanging elements in humanity.

THE COURTIN'

God makes sech nights, all white an' still
Fur'z you can look or listen,
Moonshine an' snow on field an' hill,
All silence an' all glisten.

Zekle crep' up quite unbeknown
An' peeked in thru' the winder,
An' there sot Huldy all alone,
'ith no one nigh to hender.

A fireplace filled the room's one side
With half a cord o' wood in —
Ther warn't no stoves (tell comfort died)
To bake ye to a puddin'.

The wa'nut logs shot sparkles out
Towards the pootiest, bless her,
An' leetle flames danced all about
The chiny on the dresser.

Agin the chimbley crook-necks hung,
An' in amongst 'em rusted
The ole queen's-arm thet gran'ther Young
Fetched back fom Concord busted.

The very room, coz she was in,
Seemed warm f'om floor to ceilin',
An' she looked full ez rosy agin
Ez the apples she was peelin'.

'Twas kin' o' kingdom come to look
On sech a blessed cretur,
A dogrose blushin' to a brook
Ain't modester nor sweeter.

He was six foot o' man, A1,
Clear grit an' human natur',
None couldn't quicker pitch a ton
Nor dror a furrer straighter.

He'd sparked it with full twenty gals,
Hed squired 'em, danced 'em, druv 'em,
Fust this one, an' then thet, by spells —
All is, he couldn't love 'em.

But long o' her his veins 'ould run
All crinkly like curled maple,
The side she breshed felt full o' sun
Ez a south slope in Ap'il.

She thought no v'ice hed sech a swing
Ez hisn in the choir;
My ! when he made Ole Hunderd ring,
She *knowed* the Lord was nigher.

An' she'd blush scarlit, right in prayer,
When her new meetin'-bunnet
Felt somehow thru' its crown a pair
O' blue eyes sot upon it.

Thet night, I tell ye, she looked *some* !
She seemed to 've gut a new soul,
For she felt sartin-sure he'd come,
Down to her very shoe sole.

She heered a foot, an' knowed it tu,
A-raspin' on the scraper, —
All ways to once her feelins flew
Like sparks in burnt-up paper.

He kin' o' l'itered on the mat,
Some doubtfle o' the sekle,
His heart kep' goin' pity-pat,
But hern went pity Zekle.

An' yit she gin her cheer a jerk
Ez though she wished him funder,
An' on her apples kep' to work,
Parin' away like murder.

"You want to see my Pa, I s'pose?"
"Wal . . . no . . . I come dasignin'" —
"To see my Ma? She's sprinklin' clo'es
Agin to-morrer's i'nin'."

To say why gals acts so or so,
Or don't 'ould be persumin';
Mebby to mean *yes* an' say *no*
Comes nateral to women.

He stood a spell on one foot fust,
Then stood a spell on t'other,
An' on which one he felt the wust
He couldn't ha' told ye nuther.

Says he, "I'd better call agin:"
Says she, "Think likely, Mister:"
Thet last word pricked him like a pin,
An' . . . Wal, he up an' kist her.

When Ma bimeby upon 'em slips,
Huldy sot pale ez ashes,
All kin' o' smily roun' the lips
An' teary roun' the lashes.

For she was jes' the quiet kind
Whose naturs never vary,
Like streams that keep a summer mind
Snowhid in Jenooary.

The blood clost roun' her heart felt glued
Too tight for all expressin',
Tell mother see how metters stood,
An' gin 'em both her blessin'.

Then her red come back like the tide
Down to the Bay o' Fundy,
An' all I know is they was cried
In meetin' come nex' Sunday.

The "Biglow Papers" swept the country; they were quoted and admired in England, Lowell became a power not only in literature but in American life. They constitute one of the four or five major productions, which, along with a few exquisite short lyrics, complete this poet's claim to a permanent place among American singers.

Each year of the few years between 1844 and 1850 was an *annus mirabilis*,—a wonderful year with James Russell Lowell, for in 1848, the date of the "Biglow Papers," a volume of lyrics, called simply "Poems," was also put into print and strengthened his place as a lyric poet; and still another side of his talent came to light in the "Fable for Critics," in which, with infinitely clever mastery of humorous jingle and a keenly critical yet kindly hitting off of the characteristics of the poets of his day (most of the judgments wonderfully verified by time) Lowell exhibited himself as a critic of importance in verse, even as he was to be in the essay. That he was aware of his own limitations, as well as those of his brother bards, the following

estimate of himself shows, and the passage will serve to illustrate the style and meter of this famous production:—

There is Lowell who's striving Parnassus to climb
With a whole bale of *isms* tied together with rhyme ;
He might get on alone, spite of brambles and bowlders,
But he can't with that bundle he has on his shoulders.
The top of the hill he will ne'er come nigh reaching
Till he learns the distinction 'twixt singing and preaching ;
His lyre has some chords which would ring pretty well,
But he'd rather by half make a drum of the shell,
And rattle away till he's old as Methusalem
At the head of a march to the lost New Jerusalem.

Lowell was now fairly launched. The author of the "Vision of Sir Launfal," "A Fable for Critics," and the "Biglow Papers," to say nothing of the lesser poems, was hereafter a man of assured position with critics and public. His home thrusts against slavery, and later his views on the war and the attitude of a certain class of Americans toward British opinion, had vitally affected public thought. He was not only poet but reformer.

But a cloud had appeared in the poet scholar's Elmwood home ; Mrs. Lowell's health was failing. A European trip in 1851-1852 was undertaken with the hope of benefiting her, but an infant son was lost at Rome, the mother drooped, and when they had returned she died the next year,—to leave the husband lonely, with work the best narcotic. In 1855 he lectured before the Lowell Institute, a fit incumbent of the lectureship bearing the family name, with such success that it was natural the appointment to the language professorship at Harvard made vacant by the withdrawal of Longfellow should follow the same year. As a college teacher Lowell was

at once unconventional and fascinating; he ignored traditions, made regular note-taking in class an impossibility, and whenever he liked would leave the elected subject, "talking away across country till he felt like stopping," as Barrett Wendell describes it; or he would gather a few students at his house for a Dante reading which was to be the richest memory of their college life. He held the position over twenty years, but in the end found, as did Longfellow before him, that it checked his creative work—"it damped my gunpowder," in his picturesque phrase. But for many years his days were passed in enjoyable literary labor and in college duties, with an occasional outing in Europe and with a domestic life full of charm, breeding, and social leadership.

In 1857 Lowell married for his second wife Frances Dunlap, who had come into his family as friend and companion to his first wife. It was a union in every way fit and happy. Lowell united as few men ever do the habits of the scholar and man of the world. He would sit whole days among his books in lounging coat and with pipe in mouth, happy that he might make marginal notes, chase a remote clew, and taste the recondite pleasure of the specialist; yet when he emerged from his chrysalis, he could take the wing in the brilliant social world of such a cultured center as Boston. His studies took him far afield in language and literature; but instead of an assimilation barren of fruit, all his debts to others were repaid in the mellow vintage of his own books of essays. After the first creative period in verse, this prose writing became more prominent and was embodied in four main volumes, the issue of his ripe maturity: "Fireside Travels," in 1864, "Among My Books," first series 1870, sec-

ond series 1876, "My Study Windows," 1871, to which may be added two books of political papers and addresses in 1877 and 1888, and two more the year after his death; "Latest Literary Essays and Addresses," and the delightful "Old English Dramatists," a Lowell Lecture series in which he returned to a first love and talked of the English writers he had as a young man been fond of in a volume of 1845. These successive books of essays were hailed as the prose work of an American writer of charm and distinction, and are now seen to stand, for wit, wisdom, and beauty of form, as the contribution to essay writing of the greatest of our literary critics. The earlier interests of the "Biglow Papers" gradually gave way to the interests, on the one hand, of the scholar, on the other, of the student of affairs social and political, English and American.

The year of Lowell's second marriage was important for another reason. In the spring of that year he was one of a group of literary men at a dinner given by a Boston publisher, Mr. Phillips; on that occasion the advisability of founding a magazine which should represent the higher American interests, political, social, and literary, was discussed. As a result, in the autumn the *Atlantic Monthly* appeared, with Lowell for the editor, the selection being a compliment which plainly indicated the estimate of him by his confrères in letters, — for Emerson, Holmes, Longfellow, and Motley were also present at that dinner, and they and others like Whittier and Mrs. Stowe were secured as helpers. For four years (and at a salary which was trifling compared with what the position would now command) Lowell gave the prestige of his name to the conductment of that periodical; and while not an ideal routine

editor, made it what it has ever since remained,—the best literary magazine in the United States. After leaving it in 1861, he continued to be closely in touch with it as a contributor; and from 1863 to 1872 he was, with Professor Charles E. Norton, of Harvard, joint editor of the *North American Review*, which, founded in 1815, was the earliest of the literary periodicals of distinction in this country. Lowell's impress upon American letters was the more marked because of these positions of trust.

But a third influence, and a potent one, was to come into the career of a man who had already done so much; the influence of politics. Lowell was to be statesman as well as poet, reformer, scholar, teacher, and editor. His frequent European trips had brought him more and more of sympathetic insight into English social life and government, while at the same time his admiration for the British had but deepened his belief in our own institutions and ideals. In 1877 President Hayes honored the nation by appointing Lowell to the Spanish ministry,—a post he filled for the years 1877–1880. Up to this time, Lowell had had no thought of public place, nor had his friends for him. The life of the quiet Cambridge professor hardly seemed the proper training for such positions. Mr. Howells gives a humorous account of how, when another high foreign mission was suggested to him unofficially as a possibility, he showed no interest in it; but plaintively remarked that he should enjoy the use of the library at Madrid. Upon this hint, the Spanish position was tendered. This sounds more like scholar than statesman, but Lowell was to become a well-nigh ideal diplomatic representative, as all the world now knows; for upon being transferred to England, in 1880, for five years'

service as minister, to be recalled by Cleveland, he exhibited at the court of St. James such a union of breeding, grace, and authority as to make him our beau ideal man of letters turned diplomat,—one who has perhaps done more to draw together the kinsmen of English speech on both sides of the Atlantic, than any other man we have sent to occupy that high seat of power. From this experience came the best of his political essays, and those addresses upon public men or occasions which are models of their kind.

The English residence brought one change in Lowell (if it was indeed a change), which has awakened controversy bitter and prolonged; it has been and is still said that he became less a patriotic American, and learned to put an undue valuation upon English ways and habits—a grave charge against the author of the “Biglow Papers.” Every student of Lowell must decide the matter for himself, carefully reading the letters, biographies, reminiscences, and all other memorials throwing light upon his career. It is without doubt true that, in what might be called social externals, Lowell’s long residence abroad wrought some change in the whilom Cambridge professor; he became somewhat more careful in his dress, more punctilious in points of etiquette. This was natural enough in view of his manner of living while in England. Lowell also loved the English historic background, he was deeply sympathetic to all its charm of tradition. It may have seemed to an occasional American in the English capital, that he cared more for the British lion than for the eagle of his native land. Yet again it is a fact, as his maturest political writings show, that with increasing study he came to see with clear vision the defects and

dangers of the democratic idea as it was being worked out in the United States, — perhaps in some moods even to mistrust it. On his return to this country to live out his last years, he did not hesitate to express in print his sense of our lacks, and sternly to criticize such political corruption as he saw. This brought upon him much abuse. But that Lowell remained in the depth of his nature and to the end, a lover of his country, a true patriot, it is well to believe.

He who criticizes what he loves for the sake of its bettering, is not disloyal. My country right or wrong, was not his way of expressing affection.

Although Lowell's prose was so important in his middle and later life, he never ceased entirely from verse. Indeed, the volumes "Under the Willows" and "The Cathedral," published in 1869, contain, the former, some of his choicest lyrics, and the latter, one of the noblest of his longer pieces, perhaps the finest of his culture poems, save the "Sir Launfal," and illustrative of the way the old-world beauty bore in upon him to stimulate his soul to song. "The Cathedral" is a profoundly thoughtful modern poem in depicting the mind of one who is still sensitive to the beauty of the older faith, while well aware that the dogmas associated with it have passed or are passing; and who finds peace in a broader belief acceptable to both head and heart. A little earlier, too, in 1865, at the close of the war, — the great struggle in which three of Lowell's nephews had fallen, — he was called upon to write a poem to be read at Harvard in commemoration of the heroes who had given their lives to the cause; and the lofty "Commemoration Ode" was the result. This great chant still marks high water for American patriotic poetry. It

is for us what Tennyson's Duke of Wellington Ode is for England. Lowell was here confronted with a severe test of his poetic powers. He wrote the ode under great pressure, and for that reason the first draft came like a very inspiration; as a whole, the production was uneven, but that part which invokes Lincoln as the first American, and the splendid burst at the end, beginning, —

Oh Beautiful, my country,

rise to a height rarely attained even by the major men. As an incentive to a sound patriotism (let alone its value as verse) it should be read by all good Americans at least once a year. It begins with something of academic elegance; but as it proceeds, it warms, deepens, and quickens as the vital theme takes hold upon the singer.

The last years of Lowell's long and notable life were passed in the neighborhood of Boston, where his married daughter had a home, and at Elmwood — the final two years, when his health was fast declining, entirely at the Cambridge home. It was his habit so long as possible to spend the summers in rural England, and this he did up to 1889, loyal to the end to the American's "other home." His wife died in 1885, and this loss, together with that of other friends and his failing physical condition, made these closing years comparatively dark. But to the last he kept his intellectual vigor, his inexhaustible vivacity and wit, and when Lowell's "Letters" appeared after he was gone, a new sense of his remarkable gifts was obtained, — those "Letters" being unsurpassed in American literature. His death occurred at Cambridge in 1891, and how lonely looked Elmwood without its master to the eyes of an old friend, may be learned in a fellow-poet's

noble tribute, Thomas Bailey Aldrich's eloquent elegiac entitled "Elmwood," written directly after Lowell's passing.

As we have seen, Lowell the poet did many things. He wrote charmingly of nature and caught not only her outward semblance but her subtle spiritual meaning. He was special poet laureate of June and knew the birds and trees and flowers of his beloved New England as well as Bryant or Whittier.

One example may be given:—

TO THE DANDELION

Dear common flower, that grow'st beside the way,
Fringing the dusty road with harmless gold,
First pledge of blithesome May,
Which children pluck, and, full of pride uphold,
High-hearted buccaneers, o'erjoyed that they
An Eldorado in the grass have found,
Which not the rich earth's ample round
May match in wealth, thou art more dear to me
Than all the prouder summer blooms may be.
Gold such as thine ne'er drew the Spanish prow
Through the primeval hush of Indian seas,
Nor wrinkled the lean brow
Of age, to rob the lover's heart of ease;
'Tis the Spring's largess, which she scatters now
To rich and poor alike, with lavish hand,
Though most hearts never understand
To take it at God's value, but pass by
The offered wealth with unrewarded eye.
Thou art my tropics and mine Italy;
To look at thee unlocks a warmer clime;
The eyes thou givest me
Are in the heart, and heed not space or time:
Not in mid June the golden-cuirassed bee

Feels a more summer-like warm ravishment
In the white lily's breezy tent,
His fragrant Sybaris, than I, when first
From the dark green thy yellow circles burst.

Then think I of deep shadows on the grass,
Of meadows where in sun the cattle graze,
Where, as the breezes pass,
The gleaming rushes lean a thousand ways,
Of leaves that slumber in a cloudy mass,
Or whiten in the wind, of waters blue
That from the distance sparkle through
Some woodland gap, and of a sky above,
Where one white cloud like a stray lamb doth move.

My childhood's earliest thoughts are linked with thee ;
The sight of thee calls back the robin's song,
Who, from the dark old tree
Beside the door, sang clearly all day long,
And I, secure in childish piety,
Listened as if I heard an angel sing
With news from heaven, which he could bring
Fresh every day to my untainted ears
When birds and flowers and I were happy peers.

How like a prodigal doth nature seem,
When thou, for all thy gold, so common art !
Thou teachest me to deem
More sacredly of every human heart,
Since each reflects in joy its scanty gleam
Of heaven, and could some wondrous secret show,
Did we but pay the love we owe,
And with a child's undoubting wisdom look
On all these living pages of God's book.

He could, too, write poems of patriotism in the dialect of the countryman, or in the classic idiom of the "Commemoration Ode." His Muse found inspiration in the

old-world lands, in the historical scenes or myths of long ago — witness such poems as "Rhœcus," "Columbus," "The Legend of Brittany," "The Vision of Sir Launfal," and "The Cathedral." Or he could voice the homely and domestic sorrows, as in "The Changeling," "A Requiem," "She Came and Went," and other favorites. Thinking of his work in all its range and variety, one feels that it is that of a writer with a genius for poetic expression, who might have done still more had he followed the Muse with absolute devotion, — since she is a jealous mistress. Lowell never entirely mastered his material or the poetic medium; his rhythms are somewhat uncertain, he was careless as to polish, and some of his verse work could easily be bettered technically. He always felt that with fewer distractions he might have rendered a more perfect service to song. It is with this in mind that the lover of American poetry almost begrudges Lowell his brilliant accomplishments in other fields, since they took him from his poetry. But as it is, whatever the inequality of his verse, it has the earmarks of a truly called poet. His gift for expression at its best, for the idiomatic mastery of English speech emotionally surcharged by the imagination, was more original than that of Longfellow or Whittier; there was more passion and power in his work. Longfellow and Lowell were the closest of friends in life; one was gentle, sweet, and urbane, the other impetuous, eager, and strong; the contrast in character, which perhaps drew them together, may be seen in their poetic work as well.

I have already referred to Lowell as our greatest critic. No man has given us literary criticism of such authority, distinction, and charm, so revelatory of a first-class, origi-

nal mind, perfectly at home alike in its medium of language and in its chosen theme. The scholar is there, the traveler in the literature of all lands and times, but quite as much the man, the American, the lover of garden growths, and of New England's human oddities. Look at a typical volume like "My Study Windows," and notice how Lowell writes, now of Chaucer or Dryden, now of "My Garden Acquaintances," or "A Good Word for Winter." To the very last, he made whatever topic he touched vital with his own rich personality; in the posthumous work on Elizabethan dramatists he fairly bubbles over on every page with the most delightful humor, and deals with a subject likely to be dull enough in most keepings, with a startlingly unconventional felicity, that at the same time never transcends good taste, and is freighted with more than the wisdom of the schools. In the famous paper "On a Certain Condescension in Foreigners," the legitimate indignation of the American who resents the unfair treatment of those beyond our borders, has never been vented with such wit, satire, and eloquence; the satire is all the keener because of the fun of it and the perfect temper. It is critical of our defects, too, while apparently bent solely upon criticizing the foreigners. It has a flavor of the soil, a native smack which makes it relishable forever, an undying piece of American literature. And so with other essays not a few. And in the addresses and political deliverances, like the fine paper on Democracy, one is aware of a powerful mind at work upon large things, at once masculine and happy in its manner of presentation. As a critic, Lowell uses the more old-fashioned method of leisurely discursive handling of his subject, egoistic, desultory, and delightful, instead of coldly objective and scien-

tific, according to the laboratory method of latter-day criticism. But the subjective method, the free giving of personality, when that personality is a Lowell or Holmes, a Charles Lamb or Stevenson, a Howells or Jules Lemaître, will always be loved by readers, and in the highest degree stimulative. When Lowell tells us about Pope or Dante or Marlowe, we know we are getting a first-hand impression, not the application of an impersonal rule; it is better to show a liking in a fascinating way than to exhibit no end of skill in waving an infallible metewand over literary products.

James Russell Lowell then, being a great personality, became the most distinctive critic the United States has yet produced, and an essayist of the rank which brings him into favorable comparison with the best in other lands. His reputation since his death has solidified. He is not likely to lose with the coming years. His part was an important one in those days when the Republic was shaken to its foundations, and reshaped to better things. In that remarkable circle of New England thinkers, scholars, and men of letters, he makes the impression as does no other of astonishingly diverse gifts and powers, and stands forth in his day and generation as America's most finished citizen and man of letters.

CHAPTER XII

WHITMAN

THE most unconventional personality in American literature is Walt Whitman, the good gray poet of Camden town. In many ways he is unique both as man and writer. The very fact that he is universally addressed as Walt (rather than as Walter, his full Christian name), is symbolic of the comradeship suggested by his life and work, and carried out in his appearance: the slouch hat, the flannel shirt open at the neck, and general swagger of the man of the road, and spokesman for the Commonalty. His career, picturesque in itself, exhibits strange contrasts; for he has been in his time at once a literary cult, and the most despised and rejected of all makers of American literature; regarded by many as a fraud or a freak, yet hailed by those in authority both here and abroad as the master of a new message, the apostle of the creed of the commonplace, — and still looked up to by a lusty band of disciples led by John Burroughs, as a literary god and a great original force in modern American life.

Any estimate of Whitman is upon a less solid basis than that of the leaders already studied; there is more room for difference of opinion. No one in his senses can question the place of Poe or Hawthorne or Emerson. But in the case of Whitman, his art — or lack of art — offers fair prey for literary societies to discuss, pro and con, and his

theory of Americanism is naturally an object of violent attack and as violent defense — with something to say on either side. But it is coming to be generally conceded that Whitman, for good or bad, is a force of real significance in our national development, and the study of our democratic ideals. There is nothing eccentric in grouping him with our literary leaders.

He was born the same year as Lowell and died a year later, in 1892; but what a contrast in other respects! We turn from the quiet culture of Cambridge to a Long Island farm, where Whitman's folk were hard-working descendants of English and Dutch stock, with a dash of Quaker to gentle it withal. Whitman's father was a carpenter, his mother a Dutch-American girl, Van Velsor by name, a healthy outdoor body much loved of her son, as many references show. She was a "daily and daring" horseback rider, in her younger days. The Whitmans had been Long Island people for some generations; the poet's grandfather had carried on his farming with the help of a dozen slaves. This particular branch of the family came from Massachusetts, "the mother hive of the New Englanders of the name," hailing from a seventeenth-century Englishman who had settled in Weymouth.

The boy Walt was given only a common-school education, but he seems to have assimilated good literature through the very pores of his skin, and the difficulty in the way of getting hold of good books only made him the more eager for them. He was an out-of-door sort of fellow from the first, and as he himself tells it, along Long Island's seashores "in the presence of outdoor influences, I went over thoroughly the Old and New Testaments, and absorbed . . . Shakespeare, Ossian, the best translated

versions I could get of Homer, Æschylus, Sophocles, the old German Nibelungen, the Ancient Hindoo poems, and one or two other masterpieces, Dante's among them. As it happened, I read the latter mostly in an old wood."

This is a sort of cross-lots cut to culture. But let it be said here that to read world literature like this outdoors at the most impressionable time of life, is an experience likely never to be matched in its effect. It is only the great writers who can stand the test of outdoor reading; truth mates with truth there, and the second-class folk shrink to their true dimensions, and have a feeble and hollow sound. One enjoys thinking of the young Walt thus roaming his beloved Paumanok (the Indian name for Long Island) hobnobbing with fishermen and farmers, learning country ways, looking at country sights, and always within reach of the huge old sea he was to chant in more than one strain of power. The "growth stages" of Whitman from infancy to manhood were so identified with Long Island that he declared himself he felt as if he had incorporated it. "I roamed, as boy and man, and have lived in nearly all parts, from Brooklyn to Montauk." He was "in the atmosphere of many wrecks." He speared eels through the ice, gathered sea gulls' eggs, dug clams in barefoot freedom, hayed in the sedge meadows. He footed down to Coney Island (when the sound of the name meant segregation) for a sea bath, and then raced over the hard beach, and, naked as he was, declaimed Homer and Shakespeare to the surf and the sea gulls. An unconventional sort of education this, but very likely to produce results once in a while.

Then he received the impression of a city early, for the family lived in Brooklyn from his fifth to his ninth years;

and Walt was a boy in a lawyer's office, where he got some instruction in handwriting and composition, and had access to a big circulating library, — and plunged into the "Arabian Nights," Walter Scott, and "the fair fields of old romance" in general. Next came an apprenticeship to a printer in a newspaper office, *The Long Island Patriot*. His family moved back to the Paumanok country when he was along in the teens, and Walt went between town and farm, active in debating societies, fond of the theater, and of the city panoramas as one sees them on ferryboats, from omnibus tops, or in below-ground resorts; but quite as fond of his home, his mother, and the lusty old sea. Then at eighteen he did some school-teaching in Long Island, "boarding around" the while, and he says this last was one of his best experiences for its revelations of human nature, — its glimpses behind the scenes of common humanity. The remark is very typical of Whitman, for all his days (until crippled and unable to wander and watch the human passion play), he was a wonderful observer of life, faring, afoot and free, untrammelled by any of the usual restrictions of society, over the native land he loved, as a kind of inspired reporter and tramp, whose notebook jottings turned out to be poems. He had a passion for life in the mass, in the rough; the obscure dramas of humanity, as of literature, attracted him most.

He has told of the way he haunted ferryboats, knowing all the pilots and loving the bustle, the sight and smell of it, "inimitable, streaming, never-failing, living poems." In the same fashion on the top of a Broadway bus he would chum with the drivers, who spun yarns for him, "the most vivid," he declares; and watch the human tide go by, riding the whole length of the street by day and

night. The comradeship of Whitman's verse is honest ; it is but the reflection of his life for many years. He tells us too of his theater going and opera going,—for music became a passion with him as well as the histrionic art. Whitman, in a characteristic passage of the prose book "Specimen Days" (in which much of his early life is vividly chronicled) sums up three main influences which were formative of his character: the Dutch mother stock along with the English-derived willfulness ; "the combination of my Long Island birth spot, seashores, childhood scenes, absorptions, with teeming Brooklyn and New York"; and his experiences in the outbreak of the Civil War.

From teaching, Whitman turned to newspaper work ; by the time he was twenty-one he was publishing a newspaper at Huntington, Long Island, and from this up to the war his life was that of a roving printer, writer, and editor ; among his newspaper connections were the Brooklyn *Daily Eagle* and the New Orleans *Daily Crescent*. So early as 1849, when he was thirty, we see him journeying leisurely through the West and South, and returning by the Great Lakes and Canada ; this trip of eight thousand miles, much of it on foot, added to his studies of human nature already made nearer home. No man in the history of American literature entered so vitally and broadly into democratic relations with his fellow Americans as did Walt Whitman ; he mingled with plain men and women everywhere, folk earning their living in many a hand-soiling indoor craft, or getting their bread under the sun and in the rain with the sweat of their brow. He was hail-fellow-well-met with them, and always he jotted down his impressions—to be printed eventually in

"Specimen Days" or to be incorporated in "Leaves of Grass." Through this part of his life and until well after the war years, Whitman had superb health; he was a hale, rugged young man emanating wholesome good cheer and throwing a *good luck!* to every one that passed.

For some years now Whitman lived in New York and Brooklyn; a familiar figure on the streets, in the hotels and places of amusement, dropping into Pfaf's Broadway Restaurant for a glass of beer and a talk with the *littérateurs*, or at Niblo's to hear Charlotte Cushman or the elder Booth, or going down to Castle Garden to hear Jenny Lind. The theater and opera were a valuable part of Whitman's education; he testifies that, as boy and young man, he had seen all Shakespeare's dramas, "reading them carefully the day beforehand." Meanwhile all along he was writing scraps for "Leaves of Grass," his unique *magnum opus* of poetry; by 1855—he was now thirty-six—he began to put it to press himself at the job printing office of friends; literally printing his own first book, as Kipling did his. Concerning it, he makes this pregnant note: "I had great trouble in leaving out the stock poetical touches"—an unconscious self-criticism!

The war brought a change, stirring experiences for Whitman. His brother George was an officer in the Fifty-first New York Volunteers, and at news of his being wounded at Fredericksburg, Walt hurried to Virginia; and then began his several years' work as an army nurse. He spent the time between Washington and the Southern battlefields; visiting the sick, supplying them with food, writing materials, homely comforts of all kinds; writing home letters to sweethearts whose lovers lay a-dying; reading the Bible to one, easing the posture or dressing the

wound of another,—doing God's work as truly as ever did soldier on the tented field. The grim horror and hideousness of war have never been more vividly described than in the graphic etchings of "Specimen Days." But through and under it all surges a great moral principle, an august spectacle of democracy in the throes of a new birth. Two great spectacles he thought the war furnished: "The general, voluntary, armed upheaval, and the peaceful and harmonious disbanding of the armies in the summer of 1865."

Whitman's passionate admiration for Lincoln—one strong personality going out to another—grew with the acquaintance begotten of these years. When the news came of the assassination, the Whitmans were together in Brooklyn. The mother prepared breakfast as usual, the other meals in due course; "but," says Whitman, "not a mouthful was eaten all day by either of us. We each drank half a cup of coffee; that was all. Little was said. We got every newspaper, morning and evening, and the frequent extras of that period, and passed them silently to each other." The repression, simplicity, immense implication of dumb anguish in this are very affecting. Walt Whitman was a patriot; his life and his work were twins out of a well-nigh maternal love for country.

Whitman's services as an army nurse were recognized by a government clerkship, from which he was removed because an official objected to "Leaves of Grass"; but soon secured another position and was in Uncle Sam's employ in the Interior Department from 1865 to 1874. The strain of the war experiences had sapped his vigorous health, and in 1874 a partial paralysis compelled him to withdraw to Camden, New Jersey, where, with occasional

trips to the West and New England, he passed the remainder of his days, — a period of nearly twenty years, — for he lived till 1892. During this long season of semi-invalidism, he was steadily putting into his prose and poetry his sense of the elemental effects of his beloved United States and the great dramatic shows of its teeming population. He declared that now, in his crippled condition, he appreciated as never before the foot-free life of the river fronts, the plains and the woods, and could chant of them; he had a pagan relish of the great god Pan. So late as 1879 he went westward to the Rocky Mountains. He lectured now and then on such a theme as Lincoln; he visited John Burroughs at his home on the Hudson River and once made the trip to Boston, where he went out to Cambridge to call on Longfellow and to Concord to see Emerson. Much as Whitman scorned in his own work the traditional artistic restraints of poetry, he had a sincere appreciation of the work of the major New England poets, like Longfellow, Whittier, and Bryant, and to Emerson he was of course drawn by bonds of gratitude as well as of admiration.

Whitman lived in the plainest fashion in a humble little house in Camden, where he was often visited by admirers and notables. When, with increasing infirmity, he could not use his limbs, he was wheeled into the sun and air by an attendant and so was to the last a man of the open. The returns from his books, never large, were insufficient to maintain him, and he was helped during his last years by the free-will offerings of friends on both sides of the Atlantic; for, as has been said, Whitman has never lacked admirers ardent to the point of bigotry. Since his death a Walt Whitman Fellowship has been established

for the express purpose of spreading an appreciation of him and his works.

The poet drew the design for his tomb, which may be seen at Camden; a massive, simple, rough-hewn stone affair set into a hillside in the midst of a wood. Whitman had lived to be nearly seventy-three and his appearance had long been patriarchal. The title of "the good gray poet," given by one of his warmest friends and defenders, W. D. O'Conner, refers to the fact that his hair turned early.

Any review of Whitman's life begets both admiration and affection for him. Unconventional as he was, disreputably bohemian as his habits and associates may seem to those who pay close heed to social laws, Whitman makes the impression of an utterly wholesome, robust, large-natured man of noble character. The invariable personal effect of him was one of sweet cleanliness and fine manhood. I remember hearing Mr. F. B. Sanborn of Concord say that he never received from any man such a sense of the radiated magnetism of essential health and goodness as from Whitman. It is important to realize this of Whitman the man, since so much in Whitman the writer might mislead the reader to another conclusion.

Whitman's writings began with the famous little thin, quarto anonymous edition of "Leaves of Grass," poorly printed by the author in 1855; it was quite unattractive in style, but had a good steel engraving of the poet for frontispiece, showing him in the now familiar negligé. It was put on sale in Brooklyn and New York and not a copy sold, the two bookstores that had copies finally requesting that they be removed. The only attention the book drew was that of ridicule. Then — a conspicuous example of

the value of a word in time — Emerson wrote the author a brief letter in which he praised the curious book, — and before long the edition was sold out. Whitman's feeling for Emerson can be imagined. The chief work of Whitman's literary life was to prepare the successive, augmented editions of "Leaves of Grass," which appeared from time to time up to 1882. His prose works, of immense autobiographic value for the light they threw on his poetry and his aims and ideals, appeared from 1865 to 1888 under the titles "Drum Taps," "Democratic Vistas," "Memoranda during the War," "Specimen Days and Collect," and "November Boughs." His complete works may now be had in two large, handsome, illustrated volumes, one each for the prose and poetry, published by Small, Maynard & Company of Boston.

Whitman's works have never sold largely among general readers. His appeal has been to the thoughtful few, his backing has been that of quality rather than that of quantity. From the start, he won choice critical approval and that approval has slowly spread, until now, a decade after his death, it is safe to say that, whatever one's private opinion may be of him, his works will be placed in every well-regulated library as a recognized part of American literature. His message was so unique and his manner of giving it so bizarre, that even among critics there are not a few who never entirely accepted him; some, indeed, who never accepted him at all. Up to his death and for years before it, leading magazines to which he would have been glad to contribute would have none of his verse. In this sense he was never a popular poet. Yet, to counterbalance this, he affected such Englishmen as Symonds, Rossetti, Swinburne, and Stevenson — to

mention only a few—in such wise that he came as a revelation, which led them in some instances to reconstruct their lives. In fact, there was a Walt Whitman cult in England long before there was any general American appreciation of him. No doubt his cause has been somewhat injured by the excesses of indiscriminate adulation on the part of his self-elected disciples. The Whitmanite dyed in the bone is a little inclined to be obstreperous, to have a chip on his shoulder.

The first question to ask is, What was he trying to do? Next, How did he do it? As to his intention, he himself has told us of it: "The theory of my 'Leaves of Grass' is, to thoroughly possess the mind, memory, cognizance of the author himself, with everything beforehand—a full armory of concrete actualities, observations, humanity, past poems, ballads, facts, technique, war and peace, politics, north and south, east and west, nothing too large or too small, the sciences as far as possible—and above all America and the present—after and out of which the subject of the poem, long or short, has been invariably turned over to his Emotionality, even Personality, to be shaped thence; and emerges strictly therefrom, with all its merits and demerits on its head. Every page of my attempt at poetic utterance, therefore, smacks of the living physical identity, date, environment, individuality, probably beyond anything known, and in style often offensive to the conventions."

This may not seem over-plain in meaning. In other words, Whitman believed it worth while to sing of the life, physical, mental, and moral, of an individual (himself, because he knew no other entity so well), set in the environment of these United States, with a greater

frankness and fullness than had ever been attempted. The value of this should be a complete human document and a revived sense of what our splendid democratic experiment in the new world really meant for the present and the future. Surely this is a bold ambition and one of large conception, implying an innovator, a man of striking force of character. As an inevitable condition, his purpose involves an intense egoism, — not egotism. Hear the first utterance in "Leaves of Grass": —

ONE'S-SELF I SING

One's-self I sing, a simple separate person,
Yet utter the word Democratic, the word En-Masse.

Of Physiology from top to toe I sing,
Not physiognomy alone nor brain alone, is worthy for the Muse
say the Form complete is worthier far,
The Female equally with the Male I sing.

Of Life immense in passion, pulse, and power,
Cheerful, for freest action formed under the laws divine,
The Modern Man I sing.

Whitman, then, had a message, and a remarkable one. He had intense convictions (always the bed rock of great poetry) and an adamant courage in carrying them through, such as would be admirable even in the case of failure. By what method, now, did he seek to gain his end? Whitman conceived that, his Evangel being unique, his form also should be unique. Therefore, deliberately and of set purpose, he turned his back on the traditional forms of the art of poetry, and threw his utterances into a loose, irregular, rhymeless, and largely meter-less style of dithyrambic verse, which to one trained in the conven-

tions of English poetry is puzzling and sometimes maddening. He eschewed such time-honored devices as rhyme and definite meter; he violated fundamentally the long-accepted idea that poetry in depicting life should select from its raw material such matter as is digestible, rejecting that which is not suitable for the purposes of art. Whitman, contrariwise, holding to the theory that the natural function of the body and the most material evidences of our hustling civilization are as precious and as significant as anything else, excluded nothing from his poetic survey; and hence catalogued *ad infinitum*. He never realized that for the purposes of art, the half is more than the whole. Hence, to some at least, a large part of his work is flat, stale, and unprofitable, — drearily commonplace and tedious. Those who accept this aspect of his writing either must take the position that the traditional theory of English poetry is all wrong; or else claim that Whitman is a great thinker and reformer rather than a poet in the sense that word is generally used.

As a brief example, out of hundreds, of the way in which this man violates the poetic principles, take this, chosen almost at random from "Drum Taps": —

I dress the perforated shoulder, the foot with the bullet wound,
Cleanse the one with a gnawing and putrid gangrene, so sickening,
so offensive,
While the attendant stands behind aside me, holding the tray and pail.

I submit that this is not the language of poetry nor is it the suitable treatment of a subject which in itself might be capable of poetic handling. There is a failure here both in method and in tools. If the whole poem from

which it is taken, "The Wound Dresser," shall be read, the point will be still plainer. Passages like this have lost Whitman thousands of good, honest readers who are not aware that embedded in "Leaves of Grass" there is much truly great poetry. Repelled and disgusted by such an extract, they look no farther.

Connected with this idea of Whitman's failure properly to exercise the selective instinct of art, is to many an offense not only against esthetics, but against morals. Whitman violates taste, but, it is added, he also hymns animality. It has been wittily said of "Leaves of Grass" that it contains every kind of leaf except the fig leaf. For myself, the sin is one of esthetics, not a spiritual mis-doing; for nobody can read Walt Whitman in his whole range without feeling that his purpose is high; it is his intention to laud the body because it is glorious, and conversely to attack the medieval notion that the body is vile. Still, he is wrong, in a way, it seems to me. The body is wonderful to the physiologist, to the sculptor, and to the thinker who regards it as the vessel which houses the spirit. But neither Whitman nor another will ever convince sane humanity that an animal function in itself is on the same plane for the purposes of creative and imaginative representation as those higher functions which belong to the mental and moral natures. Relative to the higher, the manifestations of the flesh are precious; but after all, they do link us with the lower orders, with the beast side of life. Whitman was so desperately anxious to do justice to the body and to depict everything, that he lost his sense of proportion. The body is good, yes; but he is mistaken in calling "the scent of the armpits' aroma diviner than prayer." This

criticism is simply common sense. Immoral, in the true sense, Whitman is not. And often, I hasten to add, he is superb in his Homeric exaltation of the flesh; listen to the following as an example of the better side of such treatment:—

If anything is sacred the human body is sacred, and the glory
and sweet of a man is the token of manhood untainted,
And in man or woman a clean, strong, firm-fibered body is more
beautiful than the most beautiful face.

Have you seen the fool that corrupted his own live body? or the
fool that corrupted her own live body?
For they do not conceal themselves, and cannot conceal them-
selves.

Whitman has still other very grave faults of style. With an extraordinary power for imaginative expression, his language is often grotesque, disjointed, and vulgar. He has a curious way of interlining his diction with foreign coinages—French, Spanish, or whatever—such as “celebres,” “melange,” “Americanos,” “camerades,” “ma femme,” “presidentiads”; and of using words borrowed from the sciences or philosophies, like “eidolons,” “philosophs,” and many more. At times his rhetoric is a wild farrago of dissimilar elements—more’s the pity, when he was capable of such really simple, fit, noble creative speech. Rarely did his diction have that organic harmony which is one of the final tests of style, of the “grand manner” of Matthew Arnold.

Yet, Whitman is a great poet—in spite of a wrong theory of technique, of an uncertain style and of many sins against taste and art. He has both vision and voice; poetic conceptions that are grand and high and a master-

ful gift of imaginative utterance. He is a great poet in spite of his lack of art, not because of it. Sidney Lanier, an artist to his finger-tips, declared that Whitman was "Poetry's butcher. Huge raw collops slashed from the rump of poetry and never mind gristle, is what Whitman feeds our souls with." This is hardly putting it too strong. No man perhaps in the poetic history of the race needs editing to be appreciated so much as Walt Whitman.

He is a poet of epithets, phrases, and lines; of places and passages, of brief inspirations. Very rarely was his flight steady; in the midst of a prosaic list of items a sudden figure or phrase may lift the reader to the very heights—or, carried on eagles' wings, you may as suddenly be dumped on a dung heap. It is in short pieces that he may best be approached by those seeking his acquaintance. We may illustrate; here is a glimpsed war-picture. (All quotations are referred to the Small, Maynard edition of "Leaves of Grass," complete in one volume. The prose selection is from the prose volume in the same edition.)

BY THE BIVOUAC'S FITFUL FLAME

By the bivouac's fitful flame,
A procession winding around me, solemn and sweet and slow—
but first I note,
The tents of the sleeping army, the fields' and woods' dim outline,
The darkness lit by spots of kindled fire, the silence,
Like a phantom far or near an occasional figure moving,
The shrubs and trees, (as I lift my eyes they seem to be stealthily watching me,)
While wind in procession thoughts, O tender and wondrous thoughts,

Of life and death, of home and the past and loved, and of those
that are far away ;
A solemn and slow procession there as I sit on the ground,
By the bivouac's fitful flame.

Take this bit, which expresses, despite the somewhat prosy manner of it, his deep love for Nature here set in contrast with the fussiness of lecture-room science : —

WHEN I HEARD THE LEARN'D ASTRONOMER

When I heard the learn'd astronomer,
When the proofs, the figures, were ranged in columns before me,
When I was shown the charts and diagrams, to add, divide, and
measure them,
When I sitting heard the astronomer where he lectured with much
applause in the lecture room,
How soon unaccountable I became tired and sick,
Till rising and gliding out I wander'd off by myself,
In the mystical moist night air, and from time to time,
Look'd up in perfect silence at the stars.

At least one example must be given of his sense of primitive man in America,—the fine though unequal poem on the Pioneers.

PIONEERS! O PIONEERS!

Come, my tan-faced children,
Follow well in order, get your weapons ready,
Have you your pistols? have you your sharp-edged axes?
Pioneers! O pioneers!

For we cannot tarry here,
We must march, my darlings, we must bear the brunt of danger,
We the youthful sinewy races, all the rest on us depend,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

O you youths, Western youths,
So impatient, full of action, full of manly pride and friendship,
Plain I see you, Western youths, see you tramping with the fore-
most,

Pioneers! O pioneers!

Have the elder races halted?
Do they droop and end their lesson, wearied over there beyond
the seas?

We take up the task eternal, and the burden and the lesson,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

All the past we leave behind,
We debouch upon a newer mightier world, varied world,
Fresh and strong the world we seize, world of labor and the march,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

We detachments steady throwing
Down the edges, through the passes, up the mountains steep,
Conquering, holding, daring, venturing as we go the unknown
ways,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

We primeval forests felling,
We the rivers stemming, vexing we and piercing deep the mines
within,
We the surface broad surveying, we the virgin soil upheaving,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

Colorado men are we,
From the peaks gigantic, from the great sierras and the high
plateaus,
From the mine and from the gully, from the hunting trail we come,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

From Nebraska, from Arkansas,
Central inland race are we, from Missouri, with the continental
blood intervein'd,
All the hands of comrades clasping, all the Southern, all the
Northern,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

O resistless restless race!

O beloved race in all! O my breast aches with tender love for all!

O I mourn and yet exult, I am rapt with love for all,

Pioneers! O pioneers!

Raise the mighty mother mistress,

Waving high the delicate mistress, over all the starry mistress,

(bend your heads all,)

Raise the fang'd and warlike mistress, stern, impassive, weapon'd
mistress,

Pioneers! O pioneers!

See my children, resolute children,

By those swarms upon our rear we must never yield or falter,

Ages back in ghostly millions frowning there behind us urging,

Pioneers! O pioneers!

On and on the compact ranks,

With accessions ever waiting, with the places of the dead quickly
fill'd,

Through the battle, through defeat, moving yet and never stopping,

Pioneers! O pioneers!

O to die advancing on!

Are there some of us to droop and die? has the hour come?

Then upon the march we fittest die, soon and sure the gap is fill'd,

Pioneers! O pioneers!

All the pulses of the world,

Falling in they beat for us, with the Western movement beat,

Holding single or together, steady moving to the front, all for us,

Pioneers! O pioneers!

Life's involv'd and varied pageants,

All the forms and shows, all the workmen at their work,

All the seamen and the landsmen, all the masters with their slaves,

Pioneers! O pioneers!

All the hapless silent lovers,

All the prisoners in the prisons, all the righteous and the wicked,

All the joyous, all the sorrowing, all the living, all the dying,

Pioneers! O pioneers!

I too with my soul and body,
We, a curious trio, picking, wandering on our way,
Through these shores amid the shadows, with the apparitions
 pressing,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

Lo, the darting bowling orb!
Lo, the brother orbs around, all the clustering suns and planets,
All the dazzling days, all the mystic nights with dreams,
 Pioneers! O pioneers!

These are of us, they are with us,
All for primal needed work, while the followers there in embryo
 wait behind,
We to-day's procession heading, we the route for travel clearing,
 Pioneers! O pioneers!

O you daughters of the West!
O you young and elder daughters! O you mothers and you wives!
Never must you be divided, in our ranks you move united,
 Pioneers! O pioneers!

Minstrels latent on the prairies!
(Shrouded bards of other lands, you may rest, you have done
 your work,)
Soon I hear you coming warbling, soon you rise and tramp
 amid us,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

Not for delectations sweet,
Not the cushion and the slipper, not the peaceful and the studious,
Not the riches safe and palling, not for us the tame enjoyment,
 Pioneers! O pioneers!

Do the feasters gluttonous feast?
Do the corpulent sleepers sleep? have they lock'd and bolted
 doors?
Still be ours the diet hard, and the blanket on the ground,
 Pioneers! O pioneers!

Has the night descended?
Was the road of late so toilsome? did we stop discouraged nod-
ding on our way?
Yet a passing hour I yield you in your tracks to pause oblivious,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

Till with sound of trumpet,
Far, far off the daybreak call — hark! how loud and clear I hear
it wind,
Swift! to the head of the army! — swift! spring to your places,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

How pathetic and impressive is this old-age defiance,
which he flung out when the ship of life was already strain-
ing at her anchor: —

OLD AGE'S SHIP & CRAFTY DEATH'S

From east and west across the horizon's edge,
Two mighty masterful vessels sailers steal upon us:
But we'll make race a-time upon the seas — a battle-contest yet
bear lively there!
(Our joys of strife and derring-do to the last!)
Put on the old ship all her power to-day!
Crowd topsail, topgallant and royal studding-sails,
Out challenge and defiance — flags and flaunting pennants added,
As we take to the open — take to the deepest, freest waters.

In two of his long poems before all others is Whitman,
in my opinion, steadily a great poet; having an adequate
subject, and using it to the noblest results of song. One
is the Thrush Chant, "Out of the Cradle Endlessly
Rocking," in which his power in nature description along
with his strong, deep love, which includes all lesser living
things like birds, is sweepingly and piercingly conveyed;
the other, the great patriotic chant on Lincoln, his idol

among men (the hero of "Captain, O My Captain"), which must take its place as a threnody in American poetry along with Lowell's "Commemoration Ode."

MEMORIES OF PRESIDENT LINCOLN

WHEN LILACS LAST IN THE DOORYARD BLOOM'D

I

When lilacs last in the dooryard bloom'd,
And the great star early droop'd in the western sky in the night,
I mourn'd, and yet shall mourn with ever returning spring.

Ever returning spring, trinity sure to me you bring,
Lilac blooming perennial and drooping star in the west,
And thought of him I love.

2

O powerful western fallen star!
O shades of night — O moody, tearful night!
O great star disappear'd — O the black murk that hides the star!
O cruel hands that hold me powerless — O helpless soul of me!
O harsh surrounding cloud that will not free my soul.

3

In the dooryard fronting an old farmhouse near the whitewash'd
palings,
Stands the lilac bush tall-growing with heart-shaped leaves of
rich green,
With many a pointed blossom rising delicate, with the perfume
strong I love,
With every leaf a miracle — and from this bush in the dooryard,
With delicate-color'd blossoms and heart-shaped leaves of rich
green,
A sprig with its flower I break.

4

In the swamp in secluded recesses,
A shy and hidden bird is warbling a song.

Solitary the thrush,
The hermit withdrawn to himself, avoiding the settlements,
Sings by himself a song.

Song of the bleeding throat,
Death's outlet song of life, (for well dear brother I know,
If thou wast not granted to sing thou would'st surely die.)

5

Over the breast of the spring, the land, amid cities,
Amid lanes and through old woods, where lately the violets
 peep'd from the ground, spotting the gray debris,
Amid the grass in the fields each side of the lanes, passing the
 endless grass,
Passing the yellow-spear'd wheat, every grain from its shroud in
 the dark-brown fields uprisen,
Passing the apple tree blows of white and pink in the orchards,
Carrying a corpse to where it shall rest in the grave,
Night and day journeys a coffin.

6

Coffin that passes through lanes and streets,
Through day and night with the great cloud darkening the land,
With the pomp of the inloop'd flags with the cities draped in
 black,
With the show of the States themselves as of crape-veil'd women
 standing,
With processions long and winding and the flambeaus of the
 night,
With the countless torches lit, with the silent sea of faces and the
 unbared heads,
With the waiting depot, the arriving coffin, and the somber faces,

With dirges through the night, with the thousand voices rising
strong and solemn,
With all the mournful voices of the dirges pour'd around the
coffin,
The dim-lit churches and the shuddering organs — where amid
these you journey,
With the tolling tolling bells' perpetual clang,
Here, coffin that slowly passes,
I give you my sprig of lilac.

7

(Nor for you, for one alone,
Blossoms and branches green to coffins all I bring,
For fresh as the morning, thus would I chant a song for you O
sane and sacred death.

All over bouquets of roses,
O death, I cover you over with roses and early lilies,
But mostly and now the lilac that blooms the first,
Copious I break, I break the sprigs from the bushes,
With loaded arms I come, pouring for you,
For you and the coffins all of you O death.)

8

O western orb sailing the heaven,
Now I know what you must have meant as a month since I
walk'd,
As I walk'd in silence the transparent shadowy night,
As I saw you had something to tell as you bent to me night after
night,
As you droop'd from the sky low down as if to my side, (while
the other stars all look'd on,)
As we wander'd together the solemn night, (for something I know
not what kept me from sleep,)
As the night advanced, and I saw on the rim of the west how full
you were of woe,

As I stood on the rising ground in the breeze in the cool transparent night,
As I watch'd where you pass'd and was lost in the netherward black of the night,
As my soul in its trouble dissatisfied sank, as where you sad orb,
Concluded, dropt in the night, and was gone.

9

Sing on there in the swamp,
O singer bashful and tender, I hear your notes, I hear your call,
I hear, I come presently, I understand you,
But a moment I linger, for the lustrous star has detain'd me,
The star my departing comrade holds and detains me.

10

O how shall I warble myself for the dead one there I loved?
And how shall I deck my song for the large sweet soul that has gone?
And what shall my perfume be for the grave of him I love?

Sea winds blown from east and west,
Blown from the Eastern sea and blown from the Western sea, till
there on the prairies meeting,
These and with these and the breath of my chant,
I'll perfume the grave of him I love.

11

O what shall I hang on the chamber walls?
And what shall the pictures be that I hang on the walls,
To adorn the burial house of him I love?

Pictures of growing spring and farms and homes,
With the Fourth-month eve at sundown, and the gray smoke
lucid and bright,
With floods of the yellow gold of the gorgeous, indolent, sinking
sun, burning, expanding the air,

With the fresh sweet herbage under foot, and the pale green
leaves of the trees prolific,
In the distance the flowing glaze, the breast of the river, with a
wind-dapple here and there,
With ranging hills on the banks, with many a line against the
sky, and shadows,
And the city at hand with dwellings so dense, and stacks of
chimneys,
And all the scenes of life and the workshops, and the workmen
homeward returning.

12

Lo, body and soul — this land,
My own Manhattan with spires, and the sparkling and hurrying
tides, and the ships,
The varied and ample land, the South and the North in the
light, Ohio's shores and flashing Missouri,
And ever the far-spreading prairies cover'd with grass and corn.

Lo, the most excellent sun so calm and haughty,
The violet and purple morn with just-felt breezes,
The gentle soft-born measureless light,
The miracle spreading bathing all, the fulfill'd noon,
The coming eve delicious, the welcome night and the stars,
Over my cities shining all, enveloping man and land.

13

Sing on, sing on you gray-brown bird,
Sing from the swamps, the recesses, pour your chant from the
bushes,
Limitless out of the dusk, out of the cedars and pines.

Sing on dearest brother, warble your reedy song,
Loud human song, with voice of uttermost woe.

O liquid and free and tender !

O wild and loose to my soul — O wondrous singer !

You only I hear — yet the star holds me, (but will soon depart,)

Yet the lilac with mastering odor holds me.

Now while I sat in the day and look'd forth,
In the close of the day with its light and the fields of spring, and
the farmers preparing their crops,
In the large unconscious scenery of my land with its lakes and
forests,
In the heavenly aerial beauty, (after the perturb'd winds and the
storms,)
Under the arching heavens of the afternoon swift passing, and
the voices of children and women,
The many-moving sea tides, and I saw the ships how they sail'd,
And the summer approaching with richness, and the fields all
busy with labor,
And the infinite separate houses, how they all went on, each with
its meals and minutia of daily usages,
And the streets how their throbings throb'd, and the cities pent
—lo, then and there,
Falling upon them all and among them all, enveloping me with
the rest,
Appear'd the cloud, appear'd the long black trail,
And I knew death, its thought, and the sacred knowledge of
death.
Then with the knowledge of death as walking one side of me,
And the thought of death close-walking the other side of me,
And I in the middle as with companions, and as holding the
hands of companions,
I fled forth to the hiding receiving night that talks not,
Down to the shores of the water, the path by the swamp in the
dimness,
To the solemn shadowy cedars and ghostly pines so still.
And the singer so shy to the rest receiv'd me,
The gray-brown bird I know receiv'd us comrades three,
And he sang the carol of death, and a verse for him I love.
From deep secluded recesses,
From the fragrant cedars and the ghostly pines so still,
Came the carol of the bird.

And the charm of the carol rapt me,
As I held as if by their hands my comrades in the night,
And the voice of my spirit tallied the song of the bird.

*Come lovely and soothing death,
Undulate round the world, serenely arriving, arriving,
In the day, in the night, to all, to each,
Sooner or later delicate death.*

*Prais'd be the fathomless universe,
For life and joy, and for objects and knowledge curious,
And for love, sweet love — but praise! praise! praise!
For the sure-enwinding arms of cool-enfolding death.*

*Dark mother always gliding near with soft feet,
Have none chanted for thee a chant of fullest welcome?
Then I chant it for thee, I glorify thee above all,
I bring thee a song that when thou must indeed come, come unfal-
teringly.*

*Approach strong deliveress,
When it is so, when thou hast taken them I joyously sing the
dead,
Lost in the loving floating ocean of thee,
Laved in the flood of thy bliss O death.*

*From me to thee glad serenades,
Dances for thee I propose saluting thee, adornments and feast-
ings for thee,
And the sights of the open landscape and the high-spread sky are
fitting,
And life and the fields, and the huge and thoughtful night.*

*The night in silence under many a star,
The ocean shore and the husky whispering wave whose voice I
know,
And the soul turning to thee O vast and well-veil'd death,
And the body gratefully nestling close to thee.*

*Over the tree tops I float thee a song,
Over the rising and sinking waves, over the myriad fields and the
prairies wide,
Over the dense-pack'd cities all and the teeming wharves and
ways,
I float this carol with joy, with joy to thee O death.*

15

To the tally of my soul,
Loud and strong kept up the gray-brown bird,
With pure deliberate notes spreading filling the night.
Loud in the pines and cedars dim,
Clear in the freshness moist and the swamp-perfume,
And I with my comrades there in the night.
While my sight that was bound in my eyes unclosed,
As to long panoramas of visions.
And I saw askant the armies,
I saw as in noiseless dreams hundreds of battle-flags,
Borne through the smoke of the battles and pierc'd with missiles
I saw them,
And carried hither and yon through the smoke, and torn and
bloody,
And at last but a few shreds left on the staffs, (and all in silence,)
And the staffs all splinter'd and broken.
I saw battle-corpses, myriads of them,
And the white skeletons of young men, I saw them,
I saw the debris and debris of all the slain soldiers of the war,
But I saw they were not as was thought,
They themselves were fully at rest, they suffer'd not,
The living remain'd and suffer'd, the mother suffer'd,
And the wife and the child and the musing comrade suffer'd,
And the armies that remain'd suffer'd.

16

Passing the visions, passing the night,
Passing, unloosing the hold of my comrades' hands,

Passing the song of the hermit bird and the tallying song of my
soul,
Victorious song, death's outlet song, yet varying ever altering
song,
As low and wailing yet clear the notes, rising and falling, flood-
ing the night,
Sadly sinking and fainting, as warning and warning, and yet
again bursting with joy,
Covering the earth and filling the spread of the heaven,
As that powerful psalm in the night I heard from recesses,
Passing, I leave thee lilac with heart-shaped leaves,
I leave thee there in the dooryard, blooming, returning with
spring.

I cease from my song for thee,
From my gaze on thee in the west, fronting the west, communing
with thee,
O comrade lustrous with silver face in the night.

Yet each to keep and all, retrievements out of the night,
The song, the wondrous chant of the gray-brown bird,
And the tallying chant, the echo arous'd in my soul,
With the lustrous and drooping star with the countenance full of
woe,
With the holders holding my hand nearing the call of the bird,
Comrades mine and I in the midst, and their memory ever to
keep, for the dead I loved so well,
For the sweetest, wisest soul of all my days and lands — and this
for his dear sake,
Lilac and star and bird twined with the chant of my soul,
There in the fragrant pines and the cedars dusk and dim.

It is worth noting, as one reads these greater poems, that it is just when Whitman is at his best that he becomes most definitely rhythmical, approaches nearest to artistic form, and does not drop into the prosy banalities which so often injure his less inspired efforts.

The "Leaves of Grass" is to be read, then, not because it is steadily poetry, but because there speaks in it a great personality, with a striking gospel. The book, whatever may be said against it, is emphatically a book of life. It is the message of a big, brave, puissant man. If I may make a suggestion, a good way to come into sympathetic communion with Walt Whitman is to begin with a selected edition of his works; such a one was made by Arthur Stedman some years ago, and can be commended. Then, the "Leaves of Grass" can be studied as a whole, after the reader is indoctrinated with Whitman by these culled poems,—and thus his full meaning and significance grasped.

A final word on Whitman's prose. It lacks organism, balance, and breeding. Most of it has the effect of the disjointed hurry of note-taking,—indeed, it was mostly thus written. There is in it—as in the verse—a fine scorn of punctuation. But Whitman is eminently picturesque and suggestive as a maker of prose, and often wonderfully poetical or powerful. Rugged as Carlyle, and far more formless, you yet feel that a leviathan is moving through the waters when he heaves in sight. As a corollary to the poetry, the prose is also important. The student, therefore, would make a grievous mistake if, for a just appreciation of the man, his prose was neglected. The following is a fair example of the full-mouthed swell of his music at times, with its pathetic under-surge of virile feeling:—

Nor will ever future American patriots and Unionists, indifferently over the whole land, or North or South, find a better moral to their lesson. The final use of the greatest men of a Nation is, after all, not with reference to their deeds in themselves, or their

direct bearing on their times or lands. The final use of a heroic-eminent life — especially of a heroic-eminent death — is its indirect filtering into the nation and the race, and to give, often at many removes, but unerringly, age after age, color and fiber to the personalism of the youth and maturity of that age and of mankind. Then there is a cement to the whole people, subtler, more underlying, than anything in written constitutions or courts or armies — namely, the cement of a death identified thoroughly with that people, as its head, for its sake. Strange (is it not?) that battles, martyrs, agonies, blood, even assassination, should so condense — perhaps only really, lastingly condense — a Nationality.

I repeat it, — the grand deaths of the race, the dramatic deaths of every nationality, are its most important inheritance-values, in some respects beyond its literature and art (as the hero is beyond his finest portrait, and the battle itself beyond its choicest song or epic). Is not here indeed the point underlying all tragedy? the famous pieces of the Greek masters — and all masters? Why, if the old Greeks had had this man what trilogies of plays — what epics — would have been made out of him! How the rhapsodes would have recited him! How quickly the quaint, tall form would have entered into the region where men vitalize gods and gods divinify men! But Lincoln, his times, his death — great as any, any age — belong altogether to our own, and our autochthonic! (Sometimes, indeed, I think our American days, our own stage — the actors we know and have shaken hands or talk'd with, more fateful than anything in Eschylus, more heroic than the fighters around Troy — afford kings of men for our democracy prouder than Agamemnon, models of character cute and hardy as Ulysses, deaths more pitiful than Priam's.)

CHAPTER XIII

LANIER

FOR half a century Poe has been regarded as the one great poet of the American South. When Sidney Lanier, the Georgian singer, died something over twenty years ago, he was looked upon by a few critics as a graceful poet of pure strain, and a man of more promise than performance,—since he was so untimely taken away. He died before he was forty years of age. But as time has elapsed, a remarkable change has taken place in the estimate of this bard. Gradually he has come into prominence, his true significance has been realized, and at last he has come to be reckoned, in the language of Dr. Ward, which when written was a prophecy, “among the princes of American songs.” The reader who opens Stedman’s authoritative “American Anthology” will find a frontispiece portrait group of eight leaders of American song; and one of them is Lanier. To those who felt many years ago that Lanier belonged to such company, this recognition is a matter of peculiar pleasure.

This widening of the reputation of Sidney Lanier since his death is no doubt due in a measure to the fact that a number of prose works of his of value have been brought out from time to time, with the result of giving a truer sense of the variety and extent of his literary accomplishments. But the main reason lies in the other fact, that

Lanier both in prose and verse was so original, so much the innovator and independent, that he inevitably won his way more slowly to sure approval. It is the history of literature that facile adaptation to traditional ways and models means a quick reward ; while new literary forces at first get no hearing, or at the best a small and grudging one. It was so with this gifted and high-souled Southerner whose life, in rare and beautiful harmony with his song, makes as moving a story as literary biography can tell.

Sidney Lanier was born in February, 1842, in Macon, Georgia, where his father was a much-respected lawyer. The family, as the name implies, was on the paternal side of French descent and Huguenot in its religious predilections. From the maternal branch Scotch blood mingled with French, so that the Celtic strain, which in men of the English-speaking race has so often been of avail for imaginative creation, was doubly Lanier's dower. He thus had the advantage of a cultured home, and received a fair education at Oglethorpe College in his native state — though one not to his own satisfaction. But on the breaking out of the Civil War Lanier, still a very young man, like many another high-spirited Southern youth enlisted naturally enough on the Confederate side. He was made a prisoner of war, and under such untoward circumstances the twin passions of his life — music and literature — comforted him ; for while thus immured he played his flute behind prison bars and wrote fugitive verses, translations and original.

Father Tabb, the Maryland poet-priest, was a fellow with him in this harsh experience, and the two began a friendship which the latter has celebrated in more than one tender lyric.

Lanier's constitution was always delicate, and the exposures and hardships of war developed the seeds of consumption, which he fought in hero fashion through young and middle manhood, to be finally conquered before he had done half the work that was in him to do. The war over, experiments at this and that occupation followed. His father wished him to follow the law in his footsteps; it may be remarked parenthetically that the literary leaders grouped in this volume with few exceptions tried the legal profession, only to find the centripetal pull of literature too strong for them. Sidney wrote to his father that he felt imperatively called away from any work save that of letters.

"How can I," he cries, pathetically enough, "settle down to be a third-rate lawyer for the balance of my little life as long as there is a certainty almost absolute that I can do some other things so much better? My dear father, think how for twenty years, through poverty, through pain, through weariness, through the uncongenial atmosphere of a farcical college and a bare army, and then of an exacting business life—through all of the discouragement of being wholly unacquainted with literary people and literary ways, . . . in spite of all these depressing circumstances, . . . these two figures of music and of poetry have kept in my heart so that I could not banish them. Does it not seem to you, as to me, that I have the right to enroll myself among the devotees of these two sublime arts, after having followed them so long and so humbly, and through so much bitterness?"

The parent wisely yielded, and behold the young man dedicated to the struggle—and a struggle indeed it was in his case. I say dedicated, for to a man like Lanier the

choice had in it all the solemnity of a consecration. His ideal of art was so lofty that its service became the most serious thing to him in the world. Nor, through whatever of setback, stress, and misery, did he for a moment lower his standard or swerve from a devotion which was little less than knightly. To the last he was a priest of that highest beauty which is the beauty spiritual.

He began by publishing a novel founded on his war experiences and full of a luxuriant imagination not as yet governed by artistic restraint; it was called "Tiger Lilies," and appeared in 1867 when he was but twenty-six. It did not win success; indeed, fiction was never his proper medium. Meanwhile, he steadily wrote verse and sent it to the magazines, — to get it promptly back as a rule. But here and there an unusually canny editor recognized the rare worth of this young Southern unknown, and at least one well-known poet, Bayard Taylor, stretched forth the friendly hand of greeting. The publication of his striking poem, "Corn," drew sufficient attention to him to result in an invitation to write the words for a cantata to the music of Dudley Buck, to be sung at the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition. And this centennial year marks the publication of the first edition of his poems, — not till he was dead did the second and definitive edition appear. This early book was tentative, and by no means fully expressed the singer who was to be, though rich promise it had. A few magazines were friendly, — *Lippincott's*, the *Independent*, and *Scribner's*, — but at the best the financial rewards of fugitive poem selling were so scant that the poet's struggle with poverty was severe, and all his life he was under this harrow. To live by magazine contributions was well-nigh an impossibility then, as indeed it is

now to any save the fictionist. Very early too, in 1867, he had married Mary Day of Macon and soon there were other mouths to feed and the struggle was sterner. So, Pegasus put on harness; Lanier did hack work, yet always work of meaning and beauty. He made a Florida guide-book attractive, and edited brave old literature for boys, like Malory's "King Arthur," the Welsh tales known as the Mabinogian, and Bishop Percy's "Reliques." Lanier loved the quaint, full-mouthed, resonant old English, and was all his days a devout student of the bygone literators, with a noteworthy effect upon his own style, and he loved quite as well the stalwart ideals of the English past. And so he presented even in such enforced literary labor the rare spectacle of a poet-editor.

In 1879 a gleam of good luck came. Music had been followed (we have seen) as a sister muse. In 1873 he had gone to Baltimore to be first flute in the Peabody Orchestra of that city; his scholarship, high character, and literary attainments had become known there and, in consequence, in 1879, he was appointed to a lectureship at the Johns Hopkins University; assuring him the first steady income (albeit a small one) of a strenuous life. Noble work resulted from this stimulus: two books of great value and individuality, the remarkable study of the English novel delivered as lectures at the university and the "Science of English Verse," a volume recognized by scholars in this field as a remarkable contribution. But alas! the respite was but brief. Just as the sky seemed clearing, and he was about to approach the zenith of his work and reward, Lanier's health, all along precarious, quite failed; he traveled with his devoted wife in literal search for breath, but hemorrhage prostrated him, until in the autumn

of 1881, in the mountains of North Carolina, the noble soul was loosened from its frail tenement of flesh :—

From the contagion of the world's slow stain
He is secure.

To hear of heroic souls like Lanier and Stevenson accomplishing great things under such limitations is a moral lesson that shames all cowardice and half-hearted endeavor.

Not till 1884 did the full edition of the "Poems" appear, with the appreciative foreword by Dr. Ward. Slightly augmented since, it now contains all of Lanier's poetic output. A number of prose books have been given to the world since his death: viz., his "Letters" and three essay volumes, "Music and Poetry," "Retrospects and Prospects," and so late as 1902, "Shakespeare and his Fore-runners." One who would understand Lanier both in his life and works is especially directed to the "Letters." The beautiful nature of the man is here revealed, and his ideal relations to the gracious and noble woman whom he called wife. Those on the subject of music written to her in absence which are to be found in this volume, are unique not only in their wonderful poetry but their revelation of a devotion that seems hardly of this earth. Had they appeared in a piece of romantic fiction they would have been declared untrue to life.

But in spite of the genuine value of his prose contribution, it is as a poet that Sidney Lanier is chiefly significant. His characteristics separate him from other makers of literature. His work possesses, to begin with, the glow and color of the South—an exuberance and rhythmic sweep, which to the sensitive reader are wonderfully stimu-

lating. Lanier was an artist of words, of melodies and poetic forms. For mastery of the niceties of verse, for the handling of rhyme and meter, for resources of tone color and music, his talent was conspicuous. In this way he broadened and enriched the technique of the native verse. He was both musician and poet, and each gift helped the other. He was a pioneer in ingenious attempts to develop to a point never before attained, the harmonic possibilities of English poetry. As an example of this, his Centennial cantata with its marginal musical notations will serve. Again, Lanier was that rare thing, a true song writer — as was Burns or Béranger or Tennyson. Many of his poems have been set to music, always a severe test of verse, with the most felicitous results. Such lovely lyrics as the "Song of the Chattahoochee," the "Song of the Future," "A Song of Love," and an "Evening Song" are witnesses to this gift. None is finer than the "Song of the Chattahoochee," which may here be quoted as a piece of verse equally remarkable for its pure singing quality, love of nature, and characteristically spiritual implication:—

SONG OF THE CHATTAHOOCHEE

Out of the hills of Habersham,
Down the valleys of Hall,
I hurry amain to reach the plain,
Run the rapid and leap the fall,
Split at the rock and together again,
Accept my bed, or narrow or wide,
And flee from folly on every side
With a lover's pain to attain the plain
Far from the hills of Habersham,
Far from the valleys of Hall.

All down the hills of Habersham,
All through the valleys of Hall,
The rushes cried *Abide, abide*,
The willful waterweeds held me thrall,
The laving laurel turned my tide,
The ferns and the fondling grass said *Stay*,
The dewberry dipped for to work delay,
And the little reeds sighed *Abide, abide*,
Here in the hills of Habersham,
Here in the valleys of Hall.

High o'er the hills of Habersham,
Veiling the valleys of Hall,
The hickory told me manifold
Fair tales of shade, the poplar tall
Wrought me her shadowy self to hold,
The chestnut, the oak, the walnut, the pine,
Overleaning, with flickering meaning and sign,
Said, *Pass not, so cold, these manifold*
Deep shades of the hills of Habersham,
These glades in the valleys of Hall.

And oft in the hills of Habersham,
And oft in the valleys of Hall,
The white quartz shone, and the smooth brook-stone
Did bar me of passage with friendly brawl,
And many a luminous jewel lone
— Crystals clear or a-cloud with mist,
Ruby, garnet, and amethyst —
Made lures with the lights of streaming stone
In the clefts of the hills of Habersham,
In the beds of the valleys of Hall.

But oh, not the hills of Habersham
And oh, not the valleys of Hall
Avail: I am fain for to water the plain.
Downward the voices of Duty call —
Downward, to toil and be mixed with the main,

The dry fields burn, and the mills are to turn,
And a myriad flowers mortally yearn,
And the lordly main from beyond the plain
Calls o'er the hills of Habersham,
Calls through the valleys of Hall.

We have thus far borne down on the technical accomplishment of Sidney Lanier; but technique is to a poet's rounded achievement only the scaffolding for the completed structure. Lanier was possessed of a fine culture, he had read much and choicely, his thought was masterly and he was endowed with a sane and large imagination. He was utterly free from and above the decking out in the fine robes of art of the petty conceits, the stale themes, and immasculate prettifications of much modern verse. He was a thinker, one who spoke wise words on the vital problems of his day, — problems of state, religion, society, science, art, and literature; often he was an intellectual pioneer ahead of his time. And with this mental breadth and grasp went a profound ethical earnestness, a subtly pervasive spirituality which make this poet most distinctive. He believed not only in the beauty of holiness, but also in the holiness of beauty. He divined that Beauty (as Keats knew) is in the last analysis a spiritual thing; that the true, the good, and the beautiful interplay divinely into each other.

These three qualities, technical mastery, independent thought, and spiritual perception and passion are the head marks of his best poetry, and the chief of this trinity of traits is the message of the spirit. Certain poems that illustrate this may be given; and first that which is of all he did most familiar, "The Ballad of Trees and the Master" — which can properly be called a perfect poem of worship.

A BALLAD OF TREES AND THE MASTER

Into the woods my Master went,
Clean forspent, forspent.
Into the woods my Master came,
Forspent with love and shame.
But the olives they were not blind to Him,
The little gray leaves were kind to Him :
The thorn tree had a mind to Him
When into the woods He came.

Out of the woods my Master went,
And He was well content.
Out of the woods my Master came,
Content with death and shame.
When Death and shame would woo Him last,
From under the trees they drew Him last :
'Twas on a tree they slew Him — last
When out of the woods He came.

How valiantly soul rises above failing flesh in his "The Stirrup Cup," one of the high-hearted moods of the man who lectured at Johns Hopkins when too weak to stand on the platform and who, his wife testifies, wrote the last of the magnificent "Hymns of the Marshes" when he was so near death as to be unable to lift hand to mouth :—

THE STIRRUP CUP

Death, thou'rt a cordial old and rare :
Look how compounded, with what care !
Time got his wrinkles reaping thee
Sweet herbs from all antiquity.

David to thy distillage went,
Keats, and Gotama excellent,
Omar Khayyam, and Chaucer bright,
And Shakespeare for a king-delight.

Then, Time, let not a drop be spilt :
Hand me the cup whene'er thou wilt ;
'Tis thy rich stirrup cup to me ;
I'll drink it down right smilingly.

Poets have only occasionally sung of wifehood in a lyric strain as pure and impassioned as those more familiar notes which tell of the wooing time. Browning did this in the noble "One Word More"; Lanier did it in the poem "My Springs," whose loveliness must go home to every heart that responds to the finer human kinships; the student of Lanier should not overlook it.

In a poem like "Life and Song," with its haunting melody, one gets a glimpse of this poet's ideal of work — almost too high a one, it would seem, for human nature's daily food. "Let my name perish," he once said in substance, in a private letter, "the poetry is good poetry, and the music good music, and the heart that needs it will find it." And it may honestly be said of Sidney Lanier that, given the shortcomings of our mortal nature, no artist has come nearer to the aspirations of the two closing lines of

LIFE AND SONG

If life were caught by a clarionet,
And a wild heart, throbbing in the reed,
Should thrill its joy and trill its fret,
And utter its heart in every deed,

Then would this breathing clarionet
Type what the poet fain would be ;
For none o' the singers ever yet
Has wholly lived his minstrelsy,

Or clearly sung his true, true thought,
Or utterly bodied forth his life,
Or out of life and song has wrought
The perfect one of man and wife ;

Or lived and sung, that Life and Song
Might each express the other's all,
Careless if life or art were long,
Since both were one, to stand or fall :

So that the wonder struck the crowd,
Who shouted it about the land :
His song was only living aloud,
His work, a singing with his hand !

Nor must it be forgotten that much of his very finest work, like the piece just quoted, came directly from the inspiration of his beloved music. There is hardly a nobler thing among his major poems than that called the "Symphony," as every lover of Lanier well knows. Again and again is this influence potent. "Music is love in search of a word," one of his poems declares, and one of the delights in reading Lanier is to feel the birth of that divinest of qualities in one's heart, and to be floated into full communion with it upon a concord of sweet sounds.

Another winsome aspect of his genius was his attitude toward nature, of whom he was a fit interpreter, a passionate lover, who could reveal her very soul so well as her myriad fair externals between sky and sod. He felt God in everything; to him the visible universe pulsed with a divine presence; incidentally, his nature poems are full of entrancing local color of his Southern home. An illustration will illuminate this statement.

FROM THE FLATS

What heartache — ne'er a hill!
Inexorable, vapid, vague, and chill
The drear sand levels drain my spirit low.
With one poor word they tell me all they know;
Whereat their stupid tongues, to tease my pain,
Do drawl it o'er again and o'er again.
They hurt my heart with griefs I cannot name:
Always the same, the same.

Nature hath no surprise,
No ambuscade of beauty 'gainst mine eyes
From brake or lurking dell or deep defile;
No humors, frolic forms — this mile, that mile;
No rich reserves or happy-valley hopes
Beyond the bend of roads, the distant slopes.
Her fancy fails, her wild is all run tame:
Ever the same, the same.

Oh might I through these tears
But glimpse some hill my Georgia high uprears,
Where white the quartz and pink the pebble shine,
The hickory heavenward strives, the muscadine
Swings o'er the slope, the oak's far-falling shade
Darkens the dogwood in the bottom glade,
And down the hollow from a ferny nook
Lull sings a little brook!

The combination of Lanier's art and spiritual force is found in the "Hymns of the Marshes," two of which, "Sunrise" and "The Marshes of Glynn," are magnificently imaginative organ chants of a dying man never so strong in soul as when he hung by a tenuous thread to life. Yet no poetry is more surgingly, vibrantly athrob with a splendid vitality. Its production under the conditions

named is little short of a marvel. We cannot give it space here, but earnestly bespeak a reading for it.

For an acquaintance with the full orbit of Sidney Lanier's nature, such thoughtful poems as "The Crystal," "Individuality," "How Love Looked for Hell," "Corn," "Psalm of the West," "To Richard Wagner," and "Clover" must be read, for they will serve to increase the sense of how largely he touched life, how vigorous was his intellect. As one reads him in his entirety, one recognizes that in the full tide of plethoric utterance, with so much to say and so piteously little time to say it, Lanier sometimes sacrificed lucidity. His fancy now and then was in surplusage, and ran into decoration and arabesque, — the overflow of a fertile mind and imagination. In full maturity doubtless the tendency might have been shaken off. It may also be (as some critics have held) that he pushed too far his interesting theory of the close interrelations of music and verse, believing that the latter had not only lyric but symphonic powers.

Had Lanier been granted longer life, he would have added much and would have perfected what he did produce with the instinct of the ardent artist. But he did enough to reveal a rare, beautiful genius. Half complete as is his poetical work, it is in quality and influence such as to associate him with those who endure. Once more has the South sent forth a slender son, seemingly a stripling like David, who has, nevertheless, overcome in Philistia, and lived to be crowned a king in Israel.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE PRESENT DAY

IN this book the American literary leaders chosen for study have all been drawn from the ranks of the dead. Critics of literature are agreed as to the danger of dealing with the living, whose work is perhaps still incomplete; with whom the critic may have personal relations, or who are not far enough away from us to be judged in the proper perspective and with the judicial calmness of Time. The dozen writers we have considered rest from their labors and their works do follow them; they have taken what is pretty sure to be a firm, final place in American literature. Moreover, they are one and all in some sort representative.

Yet this method of selecting a few typical figures makes necessary the exclusion of many writers of importance, past and present,—some of them hardly less significant than those treated herein; writers who, in a complete survey of our attainment of letters, would come in for attention such as has been given them in numerous excellent manuals. To supplement the present volume the condensed studies of American literature by such scholars as Professor Brander Matthews, Professor Katharine Lee Bates, Mr. Julian Hawthorne, and Professor Walter C. Bronson will be found most helpful; while for a fuller and

more atmospheric treatment, that by Professor Charles F. Richardson is especially recommended. In our study, the object has been to bear down on the dominant things; as one's eye seeks the salient features of a landscape, before trying to observe details and appreciate the less obvious attractions. A few words may now be spoken touching the omissions of earlier makers of literature and on the present situation.

Names in the past clamor for mention. Oratory, for example, has furnished mighty men: Patrick Henry, Henry Clay, Randolph, Calhoun, and the giant Webster; later, Choate, Everett, Wendell Phillips and pulpit speakers like Parker, Beecher, and Storrs. It must always be remembered, however, that oratory is a kind of half-brother to literature, since even the great effects of a Daniel Webster are so much dependent upon voice, presence, personal magnetism, that the magic is lost when one turns to the cold replica of the printed page. In thinking of the Concord group, too, one feels that our literature would have been poorer indeed without the essays of Thoreau, quaint hermit friend of Emerson, original both in mind and manner: that rare phenomenon, a genuine essayist. And there are later essayists of charm and distinction: "Ik Marvel" (Donald G. Mitchell), George William Curtis, Charles Dudley Warner, rush to the mind, all save Mitchell now gone; while of the living, sturdy John Burroughs stands at the head of a group of nature writers who have made themselves welcome for wholesome attraction of theme and pleasantness of presentation. The essay, critical and creative, is by no means dead, and is likely to gain in authority and acceptance when the now prevalent autocracy of fiction is past. One living writer

of indisputable genius stands halfway between fiction and the essay, hard to catalogue, so unique is he : Mark Twain, whose place in the popular heart is of the household kind ; whose work, when it is looked back upon in its entirety, will be recognized as that of a humorist in the large meaning of the word, an essentially serious-minded man who really preaches and teaches while we laugh. And writers of history we have had whose work is literature ; Prescott, Ticknor, Motley, Parkman,—the list might easily be augmented.

As to poetry, it will be well, while conceding that the first creative burst from the elder bards has subsided, not to overlook the good work that is still being done. The average of verse technique is higher than it was fifty years ago ; and there are so many aspirants for favor that it is relatively harder for one voice to be distinguished in the general chorus. Some who now seem minor may later be recognized as of real importance. With greater attention to form, there has been a loss in vital subjects ; natural enough, perhaps, although the settling of new states, the extension by war and "benevolent assimilation" of foreign territory, the great capitalist ventures and labor throes and the deeper realization of the tremendous scope and significance of the American idea, would seem to suggest no lack of themes. The very complexities of our mighty civilization, with its cosmopolitanism and material miracles, may possibly stagger the poet, for the very reason that there is so much to interpret : it is a case of embarrassment of riches. Singers of deserved reputation are still living : the veteran lyrist R. H. Stoddard, Stedman, cultured and thoughtful in verse as he is in criticism one of our foremost students, and Aldrich, an artist in his exqui-

site finish and in his earlier work by no means wanting in vibrant humanity; and Mrs. Julia Ward Howe, whose "Battle Hymn" still makes the blood beat and the feet keep time. Now and again poets like Emily Dickinson and Edward Sill have come and gone before we were fully aware how rare was their spirit. Bayard Taylor's importance was such as to give him a chapter to himself in Mr. Stedman's study of our native singers. The temptation to add almost indefinitely to the list of capable lyric poets, both living and dead, must be sternly resisted. Nature has been worthily depicted in the late lyric work of a group of Canadians headed by Bliss Carman, and no phase of present verse work is more conspicuous than this of the reverent and rapturous appreciation of nature. The homely life of common humanity (if any humanity can rightly be called common) has been interpreted with truth and pathos by a band of dialect poets of whom Riley is easily first. Nor are signs wanting that our poets are likely in the near future to essay more sustained work in narrative and dramatic verse, encouraged thereto by the very evident tendency to rehabilitate the literary drama.

By far the most significant literary movement of this generation in the United States (as indeed wherever literature is cultured) has been that of the development of prose fiction. This modern form, for better or worse, has come to occupy a tyrannous central position, well-nigh to the crushing out of elder forms like poetry, the essay and drama, in the general regard. Fiction appeals to the widest audience (the play is an exception, but as yet we hardly have a literary drama in this country), simply because it is most easily understood by the people, the most democratic of literary molds in that it can best

receive the impress of the very form and image of our time. It surveys classes and masses alike; every state, section, even village, has its novelist; within the pages of the story all humanity jostles and hobnobs. The service thus done by fiction in teaching the different parts of the land to know each other and so to realize the variety and vastitude of our national life, is likely to be underestimated rather than the reverse. The novel, in this thought, is a mighty civilizer, drawing men together as do the wonderful material uses of electricity, and for the higher purposes of a comprehensive sympathy and love.

In the United States since 1860, there has been a remarkable growth and perfecting of the novel of real life — realistic fiction, in the critical phrase. In the middle century, Harriet Beecher Stowe, besides writing in "Uncle Tom's Cabin" an epoch-making book, vital in power, whatever its defects and prejudices, initiated in her other stories a faithful first-hand study of homely New England character, which has been fruitfully developed by an able band of later-day followers with Miss Wilkins and Miss Jewett at their head. The names throng here and cannot be enumerated. Two leaders, however, must have special mention: Howells and James, for they, more than any others, started the present-day school. Mr. James, whose earlier and better work dealt with American conditions, often in their European aspects, has of late years lived abroad and written of life there, meanwhile deteriorating both in the breadth and clarity of his art. But Mr. Howells has steadily produced a series of fictional studies which the future social historian is likely to recognize as the most comprehensive and truthful survey of certain sections of Eastern life — especially that in cities

—ever made by an American novelist. And some two-score younger writers, both men and women, might be enrolled as using the method and having the aim of this leader.

In the Far West, a pioneer like Bret Harte began that exploitation of the more picturesque types and incidents of a newer phase of our civilization which has spread throughout the land; California itself in so recent a man as the late Frank Norris lending itself once more to a masterful delineation.

The Middle West and the Southwest, with all they stand for in difference of material conditions, nationality of the settlers, and physical environment, have been and are being displayed by able fiction makers; writers like Eggleston, Wallace, Wister, Garland, Fuller, Tarkington, Thanet, White, are but a few of many. The prevailing temper in these sections of the country, as exhibited in fiction, is that of a strong, cheery optimism, along with an insistence on the facts—sometimes carrying the author into grimness and sadness. The fiction of the West as a whole may be described as wholesomely realistic. In the South, which has been revealed of late in novel and short story by a group of gifted writers who have infused a most welcome vitality into our latter-day creative writing, the tone is more romantic. This may be explained perhaps by the environment, the picturesque conditions both human and physiographic of that part of the land. Page, Stuart, Harris, Lane Allen, Murfree, Fox, are but a few of the names that naturally are suggested, where others are as deserving of mention. So steady and interesting is the production in all parts of the United States, that one is overwhelmed in the attempt even to keep up with it,

to say nothing of its classification. A surprising amount of it is really good work, and that all this activity will leave a residuum of worthy fiction illustrative of the newer America, no student can doubt. In all this recent work nothing is more noteworthy than the prominence of women writers, who now compete on even terms with men and often win the coveted prizes. The day when, to Jane Austen, the writing of novels seemed of dubious gentility, has long since passed away.

What is the present literary center of the United States? Beyond question, commercially, it is New York, which has become the natural headquarters as a mart where literary folk may dispose of their wares. Early in the nineteenth century the Knickerbocker School of writers gave the metropolis a fair literary fame; still earlier, Philadelphia had some such claim. Then Boston and its vicinity became a worthy center; now, although there is still much of literary atmosphere and influence in the Massachusetts city, New York, in the fullness of time, seems to have its revenge. But looking ahead, one may see that the line of literary demarcation is likely to be pushed westward; a generation hence a majority of the representative writers may come from beyond the Mississippi. No one city or locality can long hold literary pre-eminence in a country like ours, of rapid radiation and shifting interests. We are more likely to have several centers than one of any permanence. But so long as this deselectionizing of literature makes for a truer, firmer Americanism, all will be well.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

THE student who becomes interested in the dozen great writers discussed in this volume may supplement his study by reference to some book in which the national literary development is sketched with more of fulness and detail, and many writers merely mentioned herein, or omitted altogether, are described. The following, carefully chosen from a considerable list, may be recommended: —

“The New England Poets,” by Prof. W. C. Lawton (Macmillan). This is a study of six native poets, — Emerson, Hawthorne, Longfellow, Whittier, Holmes, and Lowell.

“American Literature” (1607-1885), by Prof. C. F. Richardson (Putnam).

“A Readers’ Handbook of American Literature,” by Col. T. W. Higginson and H. W. Boynton (Houghton, Mifflin & Co.).

“American Literature,” by Prof. W. P. Trent, in the “Literature of the World” series (Scribner).

“America in Literature,” by Prof. Geo. E. Woodberry (Harper).

“American Literature,” by Prof. Brander Matthews (Appleton).

“Literary History of America,” by Prof. Barrett Wendell (Scribner).

“Chronological Outlines of American Literature,” by S. L. Whitcomb (Macmillan). This will be found very helpful in the way of assisting to an understanding of contemporaneous historical events in connection with the literary production.

“Poets of America,” by E. C. Stedman (Houghton, Mifflin & Co.). This is the best book on the development of our native song.

The student who wishes fuller description of the American literary masters is referred to “The American Men of Letters”

series (Houghton, Mifflin & Co.), in which appear, besides those not studied in this book, the lives of Cooper, Emerson, Poe, Bryant, Hawthorne, Longfellow, and Whittier; while those of Lowell and Holmes are in preparation.

A sympathetic life and study of Whitman is that by John Burroughs (Houghton, Mifflin & Co.). The sketch of Lanier by Dr. J. H. Ward, introductory to the volume of his poems (Scribner), is admirable.

The student who desires further selections from the works of standard authors, as well as examples of the writings of American authors of repute, may be referred to "The Library of American Literature" (1608-1889), edited by E. C. Stedman and E. M. Hutchinson, in ten volumes.

From the large number of books which throw sidelights upon American authors, in the way of reminiscence, anecdotes, and personal testimony, and thus make the subject more familiar and delightful, these may be especially recommended:—

"American Book Men," by M. A. DeWolfe Howe (Dodd, Mead & Co.).

"Authors and Friends," by Mrs. James T. Fields (Houghton, Mifflin & Co.).

"Cheerful Yesterdays," by Col. T. W. Higginson (Houghton, Mifflin & Co.).

"Literary Friends and Acquaintances," by W. D. Howells (Harper).

"Reminiscences," by Julia Ward Howe (Houghton, Mifflin & Co.).

"Recollections of Eminent Men," by E. P. Whipple (Houghton, Mifflin & Co.).

The student is urged in his study of American literature to read representative examples of the authors of standing whenever possible, and to make a point of reading a given art work as a whole, whether it be poem, essay, fiction, or drama. It is better to get a first-hand acquaintance with an author than to put more time on criticism about him and never come to a taste of his quality itself.

